

FIRST ISSUE

AFTER THE BATTLE



NORMANDY 1973 Number 1

AFTER THE BATTLE



BATTLE OF THE BULGE Number 4

AFTER THE BATTLE



THE BATTLE OF THE FALAISE POCKET Number 8

AFTER THE BATTLE



CROSSING THE RHINE Number 12

20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

AFTER THE BATTLE



CORREGIDOR Number 23

AFTER THE BATTLE



ST MALO 1944 Number 33

AFTER THE BATTLE



BREAKING ENIGMA Number 37

AFTER THE BATTLE



BUDAPEST Number 40

AFTER THE BATTLE



THE OTHER D-DAYS Number 44

AFTER THE BATTLE



ADVERSARIES MEET AGAIN THE DRIVE ON PRUM-FEBRUARY 1945 BATTLE OF HONG KONG Number 46

AFTER THE BATTLE



THE SOVIET VICTORY IN EUROPE Number 50

AFTER THE BATTLE



THE LONDON VICTORY PARADE LOCH NESS WELLINGTON Number 53

AFTER THE BATTLE



RUDOLF HESS Number 58

AFTER THE BATTLE



THE REICHS CHANCELLERY AND THE BERLIN BUNKER THEN AND NOW Number 61

AFTER THE BATTLE



REMAKING MEMPHIS BELLE OPERATION 'SEALION' Number 69

AFTER THE BATTLE



PELELIU Number 78

SPECIAL EDITION

Number 80

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CONTENTS

FROM THE EDITOR	1
WAR FILM	
<i>Stalingrad</i>	28
WRECK RECOVERY	
Typhoon crash at Boulon, Normandy	37
IT HAPPENED HERE	
The Death of Rommel	38

Front Cover: Twenty years of *After the Battle*.

Centre Pages: The Battle of Stalingrad now re-created for the cinema by Senator Film.
Top left: German troops burn down a Russian village. *Top right:* Wounded in the First Aid Post. *Bottom left:* Knocked-out Russian T-34 and crew burn. *Bottom right:* German troops fight for the factory in Stalingrad.

Back Cover: The original wooden cross (minus its swastika) still marks the grave of Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel. (Karel Margry)

Acknowledgements: We are indebted to Herr Dieter Keppler, owner of Rommel's house, for permission to take photographs on his property, and to Herr Heiner Kahle of the Rommel-Archiv for his kind assistance. We are also grateful to Jean-Pierre Benamou for the provision of photographs for the Typhoon story, and to all our readers who have written to us over the last 20 years to keep us informed of 'after the battle' developments and events around the world.

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Harry Williamson, alias Wulf Schmidt, with Rupert Allason, alias Nigel West.

From the Editor . . .

Readers will hardly need to be reminded that, as far as the Second World War is concerned, we are now well into a five-year period of 50th anniversaries. One could easily fill each issue with reports of such events from around the world and it is almost iniquitous to be selective.

In our own small way, we also have an anniversary to celebrate with this issue, but it is hardly seems believable that we have been portraying the 'After the Battle' scene for 20 years. The big difference between editing the magazine then as now is that in the 1970s many more eye-witnesses were still alive, and one could obtain first-hand accounts for virtually every story. This helped enormously with the pin-pointing of particular locations which needed to be photographed, and I can think of many instances where the loss of a key participant would have made the presentation of the story of far less interest.

For example, turn to issue 74, published 18 months ago. Then, we were fortunate to have Harry Williamson, alias Wulf Schmidt, with us to show the exact spot where he landed by parachute as a German spy in 1940. Harry died in October 1992 aged 81, so

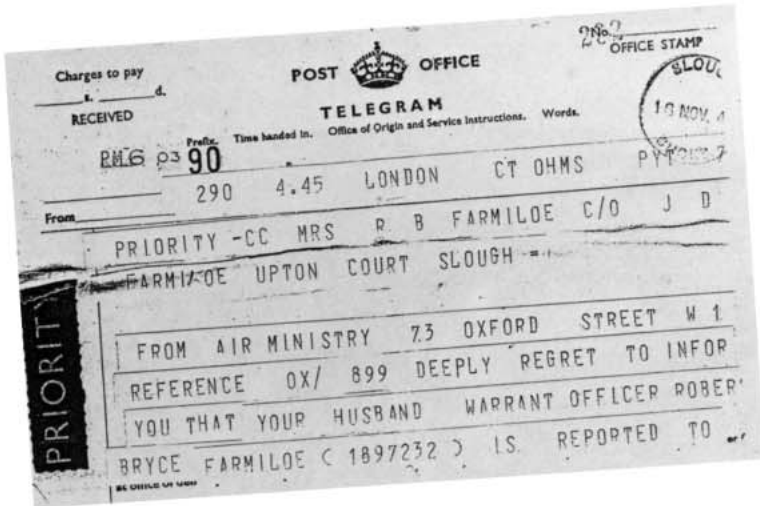
this particular story would have been so much the poorer had it been told now.

Another example came in February 1993 with the death of Commander John Ouvry. Readers of *The Blitz Then and Now, Volume 1* may recall that John Ouvry, as a young naval officer, was responsible for defuzing the first magnetic mine which had been dropped on the Thames foreshore off Shoeburyness in November 1939. That actual mine casing still survives (displayed on HMS *Belfast* in the Pool of London) and, when I began researching this incident in 1987, I discovered that John Ouvry was still alive and well (over 90!) living in a retirement home on the South Coast.

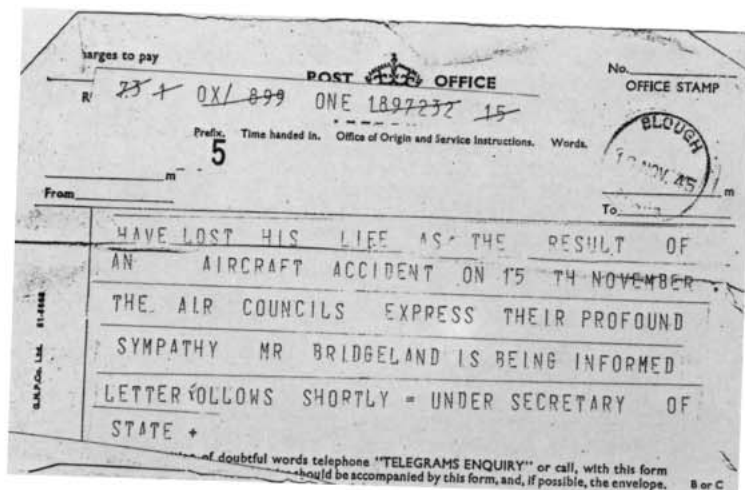
He kindly provided me with a copy of his 1939 report with photographs of himself showing the mine to HM King George VI after the award ceremony at which the King had decorated him with the Distinguished Service Order. When John told me that he had never seen the mine since that day, I knew we had to bring him up to London to take a unique 'then and now' photograph (which appears on page 55 of Volume 1). On reflection, I am so glad that I made the effort.



Lieutenant-Commander John Ouvry: *left*, during the war at HMS *Vernon*, the Navy's land-based 'mine school' at Portsmouth, and *right*, on HMS *Belfast* in 1987.



A Post Office telegram was the harbinger of dreaded news for so many wives and families during the war.



And this gives me the cue to recount another amazing story. To save me motoring down to Portsmouth to collect John Ouvry and bring him back to London, which would have entailed four trips in one day, I asked Barry Farniloe, who then lived at Waterloo, if he would mind driving John up to the *Belfast* and so reduce the logistics to one round trip, to which Barry gladly agreed. Anyway, I met Barry in a most unusual way and it's a good story well worth telling.

In April 1986, I was working at home (at Harlow in Essex) putting together issue 52. It was Easter Monday and it was snowing! During the afternoon, there was a knock at the door and a chap appeared who said he had been directed to call on me after making enquiries in the local pub. As soon as he mentioned his name, 'Farniloe', I told him that I knew what he had come about — to see where his father had crashed in 1945. He stood there speechless! All afternoon he had been driving around trying to find anyone who knew about an aeroplane crash at 'Thrushes Beech' and here, suddenly, was someone who knew every single thing about it. He just could not believe his luck.

What had happened was this. Being the nearest crash to where we lived, Gordon, my son and deputy, had already researched all the details which we had on file. Barry's

A faded press cutting treasured by a loving wife. Robert served with No. 197 Squadron from July 20 to November 25, 1944 — one of the famed Normandy Typhoon squadrons listed on page 21 of issue 69.



father, Warrant Officer Robert Farniloe, who had enlisted in 1943, had been based at West Malling with No. 287 Squadron equipped with Tempest Vs, and on the afternoon of November 15, 1945, he was performing aerobatics above the clouds in JN763. Suddenly, probably due to over-stressing the aircraft, the Tempest broke up and fell to earth at *Threshers Bush* (the name was corrupted in the letter Barry received from the Ministry of Defence in 1974 which had thus led Barry astray in his search). My nearest neighbour, Charlie Ward, had actually seen the pilot fall to earth, his parachute unopened, so I was able to walk with Barry a few hundred yards up the road to show him the exact spot where his father had died. It was an emotional and moving moment, made all the more poignant when I showed Barry the small memorial we had erected in our garden overlooking the crash site.

Barry just could not reconcile how, out of the blue, he had stumbled on someone who knew every pertinent fact about his father's death; had even photographed his grave at Brookwood; and why a total stranger should have put up a memorial in his garden to a pilot killed forty years ago. However, by now readers will understand the sentiments behind my motive for so doing, but it was then my turn to be surprised. Barry told me that, after his father's accidental death, his mother had remarried and that his stepfather was none other than Sub-Lieutenant Ken Bramah whom I had pictured on page 762 of *The Battle of Britain Then and Now*. Small world, indeed!



Above: His Tempest fell in pieces along this stretch of road, Robert, his parachute unopened, hitting the ground in the entrance to the field on the right. Officially, the aircraft was deemed to have broken up in the air, possibly due to a structural failure or 'excessive loading due to loss of control'. Right: Our memorial adapted from a fire hydrant marker which we found discarded in the ditch on the left.



Just prior to Harry's Williamson's death, Ian Henderson, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and author of our feature in issue 34, brought back Milburn H. Henke who, in 1942 as a young private of the 133rd Infantry, became the first American to officially set foot in Great Britain (or should we now say Europe?) in the Second World War. Ian wrote to us in September 1992 to say that 'Milburn Henke's return is just a part of a major two-week series of events, starting our "return of the GIs" promotion. Milburn is visiting all his old haunts and is partly the subject of a documentary television programme for PBS in the USA. He is a first-class speaker and a great "ambassador" for the US. We have also brought back "Tuck" Smith, the pilot of the RAF Catalina that found the *Bismarck* in 1941 — before the USA entered the war.

'The jewel, however, is the major piece that I missed completely in issue 34, and that has only come to light here in the past few months. This is the fact that the US Rangers were founded in Carrickfergus in 1942 by Major Darby — hence Darby's Rangers and later Merrill's Marauders. Darby appears in the Carrickfergus picture on page 6 as the then ADC to General Hartle. At Fort Benning, Georgia, in June this year the Rangers wore T-shirts saying "Carrickfergus Northern Ireland — Home of the Rangers"!

'Next week a commemorative stone is to be unveiled at the old camp site, with 30 Rangers flying over.'



Above: Milburn Henke, now a retired restaurant owner from Minnesota, enjoys a pint of Guinness in the Deer's Head pub in North Street, 50 years after he first set foot in Belfast as the first official American GI in Europe in World War II. **Below left:** Tuck Smith with his wife (left) visit the Belleek Pottery where a commemorative plate was presented to him by the artist, Pauline O'Hara (right) and the managing director of the pottery, John Maguire, in recognition of the part Tuck played in sinking the *Bismarck*. **Below:** Birthplace of the US Rangers — Carrickfergus — now commemorated by the erection of this memorial on September 25, 1992, in the presence of former Rangers.



Another recent visitor from North America — in this case from Vancouver, British Columbia — was Giselle Jakobs, whose grandfather Josef was another of the German agents parachuted into Britain just prior to the intended invasion. Wulf Schmidt was turned round into a double agent, whereas Josef Jakobs paid the supreme penalty in the Tower of London.

Giselle had first written to me in September 1990 (see issue 72) and I subsequently arranged a tour for her of all the locations in London which featured in her grandfather's last days. On a rainy Monday morning in September 1991, we visited the MI5 interrogation centre (see issue 74); the Duke of York barracks in King's Road, Chelsea, where Jakobs' court-martial took place; and the Tower where he was imprisoned and shot. We ended the day by visiting the site of his burial at Kensal Green, the exact spot now having been covered with new burials. (Compare the picture with that on page 25 of issue 11.)

And, according to Malcolm Hooson of Royston, Hertfordshire, who has carried out a study of the letters of Carl Lody, the first German spy shot in the First World War (see issue 58), Lody was only the third man to be executed in the Tower's 1,000-year history. It sounds unbelievable but, apart from Lord Hastings in 1483 and the Earl of Essex in 1601, all the others were women! With

Jakobs being the twelfth man shot since Lody, as Malcolm comments 'the 20th

century has certainly made up for this discrimination!'



Giselle Jakobs, granddaughter of Josef Jakobs shot in the Tower of London, at St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green in north London. Now the old Plot G, where he was buried at government expense in August 1941, has been completely filled with new graves.



In my editorial round-up in issue 66, I commented on the publication of a new book, *Shot at Dawn* which, for the first time, named all the men who were executed during the First World War for cowardice, desertion, or other military offences. The book was bound to raise debate on the merits of summary justice on the battlefield in 1914–18, and Andrew MacKinlay, MP, soon took up the torch to campaign for royal pardons for the 307 men ‘shot at dawn’ at a time when the traumatic effects of shell-shock, sleep deprivation, cold and the horrors of trench warfare were little understood.

In February 1993, the Prime Minister replied to Mr MacKinlay’s request for royal pardons in sympathetic vein:

‘The First World War was probably the bloodiest conflict ever. At certain periods troops from this country and those of our allies were being killed at a rate of tens of thousands a day.

‘Soldiers who deserted were sentenced against this background of heavy casualties among the vast majority of fellow soldiers who were carrying out orders. The authorities at the time took the view that deserters had to receive due punishment.

‘Millions of soldiers put their lives at risk and endured the most terrible sufferings. They had to be able to rely on the support of their comrades in arms.’

Mr Major finished by saying that ‘after long and hard reflection, I have reached the conclusion that we cannot re-write history by substituting our latter-day judgement for that of contemporaries, whatever we might think.

‘With the passage of time, attitudes and values change. I am sure that all people, when they think of this subject now, recognise that soldiers who deserted did so in the most appalling conditions and under terrible pressures.’

Mike Jabecek, publisher of *Kanadske Listy* (Canadian Pages) of Ontario, keeps me informed of events in his native country,

The dramatic change in East-West relations has led to some remarkable reunions.

Left: This is the Czech Air Force HQ in Stará Boleslav where Group Captain Ron Hockey (third from left) was bestowed with the title of Honorary Distinguished Pilot of the Czechoslovak Air Force from General Baláz (centre). Second from left is General Rudolf Krzák, former member of the ‘Silica’ team. (Mike Jabecek who sent us the photos is second from the right.) **Right:** Group Captain Hockey at the service in the church on Resslova Street in Prague where seven Czech patriots died.

Czechoslovakia, now more correctly titled the Czech Republic.

In June 1991, Mike had the honour to personally chauffeur and guide ex-Group Captain Ron Hockey on a nine-day tour throughout eastern Bohemia. Hockey was one of the leaders in RAF air operations to support special forces in Europe and, more significantly, was the pilot of the Halifax which flew the Heydrich assassination team to Czechoslovakia in 1941 (see issue 24).

‘We visited many of the towns and villages which he knew only from the air 50 years ago,’ wrote Mike in May 1992. ‘This time, the mayors received him and made him an honorary citizen. We visited Lidice and Ležáky, the two villages wiped out after the assassination, and I was almost afraid that someone somewhere might say to Ron, “If you had not found the right place for the men to jump that night, my grandfather would still be alive”. Fortunately, nothing of the sort happened.

‘We had a solemn ceremony in the church in Prague on June 18 — the 50th anniversary of the day that seven men fought and died there. President Havel was present, and it was rumoured that Ron might receive the Medal of King George of Poděbrady or even the highest Order of the White Lion. Sadly, however, Ron died in February 1992 and, in the pre-election confusion, no one is sure what will happen.

‘This year, Wing Commander Foster received the Honorary Membership of the Ležáky Association for Ron Hockey, and at the same time Ron’s uniform, cap and sword were displayed in Prague in memoriam.

‘Also in March this year, a 75-year-old man shot himself in front of the plaque commemorating Alfred Bartos of the “Silver A” team. The man had been a waiter in the Hotel Veselka in 1942 and worked with Valčík and it is believed that the man was a traitor of major proportions.

‘Now only Jan Zemek is alive of the seven men dropped in December 1941 — he was in the “Silver B” team and a ceremony was held in June at Zámčáček (the place with the three pillars on page 36 of issue 24) where 200 Czech patriots were killed by execution squads in connection with “Silver A” operations in the area, including Ležáky. In the past, Ležáky was grossly neglected by the Communist government while Lidice was presented as a symbol of Czech left-wing resistance against the Germans.’

Keith Spanner of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, also wrote in May 1992 to tell me of his visit to the Cheshire locations in the Heydrich story. ‘I met Mrs Edna Ruscoe as you did — she was well and happy to chat of her memories of Jan and Josef. She told me that her sister has now visited Prague and seen the crypt where their wartime boy friends died.’

Below left: The clandestine Czech radio station Libuše operated in this building in Bohdaneč Spa, near Pardubice, after it was moved from the village of Ležáky which was destroyed by the Nazis in retribution for Heydrich’s assassination. The radio operator, Jiří Potuček, occupied the room just above the group captain’s head. All the helpers of Libuše were later executed. **Below right:** At the Ležáky Monument.





Laurie Goldstraw (who told us the story of Private Cortell and Glen in issue 74) served in the Royal Navy and went back to Dieppe for the 50th anniversary of the raid, 'an enormously well-attended affair with a huge Canadian presence'. He enclosed this photo of Jack Nissenthal, the RAF flight sergeant who was to examine the radar equipment at Pourville, with Colonel Pat Porteous, VC, seen explaining the attack on the battery at Varengeville.



Another reunion, this time through the diligent efforts of our author, Jean Paul Pallud. In May 1992, he was instrumental in bringing together the two surviving crew members (Marcel Jutteau, left, and Robert Job) who served together in French armoured forces in 'Cr cy-au-Mont', a Renault B1bis knocked out near Abbeville in 1940 (see pages 411-413 of *Blitzkrieg in the West, Then and Now*). Marcel Jutteau was the radio operator and Robert Job the driver.

In *Blitzkrieg in the West Then and Now*, Jean Paul Pallud told the story of a French Renault B1bis tank of the 347 me Compagnie de Chars, the 'Cr cy-au-Mont', which was disabled near Abbeville on June 4, 1940. Two of the crew, Lieutenant Marcel Blondelet and Caporal-Chef Robert C lerier, were killed, and the other two, Robert Job and Marcel Jutteau, were wounded and taken prisoner.

Recently, the founder of the 'France 40' museum in Abbeville, Henri de Wailly, informed us that he had had the pleasure of meeting Robert Job during the ceremonies organised by the museum for the 50th anniversary of the battle. When Robert Job said that he had never heard from his comrade Jutteau since that fateful morning in June 1940, Jean Paul decided to try to trace him.

Appeals were published in the press and the bulletins of PoW veteran associations and, although several 'M. Jutteau's were found, including one man who had emigrated to the USA, it was not until November 1991 that the right Marcel Jutteau was traced.

The two men exchanged letters, and on May 7, 1992 they met at Saint-Martial, a small village in the Gard d partement, south of France, where Marcel Jutteau had settled after the war. Marcel explained how he had been injured by gun-fire while trying to get away from the burning 'Cr cy-au-Mont' and, although his wounds were treated by the Germans, he still has a rifle bullet lodged in his thigh. Some time later, he was sent to a camp in Silesia, then on to Czechoslovakia where he worked as a butcher. There he met a young Polish girl, displaced like himself by the Germans, and, when freed in May 1945, he married her and brought her back to France.

It is nice to see that Peter Gray, founder of the Military Vehicle Conservation Group (see issue 5), and who now lives in Normandy, is planning a special 50th anniversary tour for June 1994. Peter, writing from La Campagne, Nay, France 50190, says that his area was the battleground of the US 90th Division and not far away is an advanced airfield which supported B-26s.

'Anyway,' writes Peter, 'so far I have three tanks entered for my Tenth Liberty Highway Tour, and a scoop in the shape of Helen Patton — old 'Blood and Guts' granddaughter — who I met over here in 1990 and who is coming with us. Ten years ago the family bought the old Priory at Nehou (his HQ in '44 before the breakout), and they have spent millions on the restoration for its use as a seminary, the family being very

religious. It has never actually been lived in, but Helen is going to alter that by moving in this summer [1993]. Nehou is about 30 km from me, and I was there for the dedication of a monument to him in 1990 when I met her. George Kimmins was with me and, since she saw him in his full kit, he has become quite friendly with the family and has visited them in the USA. Helen calls him "the Keeper of the Flame".'



Imbued with the aura of the Third Army's legendary general, George Kimmins (we last pictured him on the back cover of *Wheels & Tracks* No. 3) has formed the George S. Patton Jr Appreciation Society and changed his name by deed poll to Patton. Here George is pictured with Helen Patton (granddaughter of the 'real' George) in June 1990 at Nehou where the general had his tactical HQ in 1944. (Interested readers can write to George Patton at 47 Church Road, Portslade, Sussex, BN41 1LB.)



Left: Sergeant Storey: 'Troops crossing the Jacques Cartier River on a pontoon bridge in 1914. I copied this from the book *With the First Canadian Contingent* which was published in



1915 by the Canadian Field Comforts Commission.' Right: 'My comparison photograph of the crossing site in 1985 shows an M35CDN 2½-ton truck crossing a Bailey Bridge.'

'I have been a regular reader of your magazine since the first issue', wrote Sergeant W. E. Storey of the Canadian Military Engineers in January 1992, 'and after seeing Laurie Goldstraw's article *The Paratrooper and His Dog* in No. 74, I have been prompted to write to you. The story



about Private Corteil and his dog, Glen, has led me to send you a picture of the dog, Johnny, used by the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. Unfortunately at this time I have

no other information about this dog to pass on other than a photograph.

'On page 3 of No. 74, the caption for the photograph of Private Jimmy Gardner has a quick description of the coloured bands worn on the shoulder straps by members of the 3rd Parachute Brigade in the 6th British Airborne Division. This description is not quite correct and to be more correct should be as follows: 8th Parachute Battalion — Light Blue, 9th Parachute Battalion — Maroon, and 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion — Gold. These coloured bands were not only worn in the UK but on the Continent as well. They were used to help identify and organise troops on the Drop Zone. Within the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, the Training Company did not wear the gold band.

'I have also enclosed a couple of "before and after" style photographs. The first pair were taken in CFB Valcartier which is 35 km north of Quebec City, Quebec, and is the home of the French Canadian 5 Brigade (no, not 5th). Valcartier Camp, as it was known in 1914, was the training camp for the First Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) prior to leaving for the United Kingdom. This spot was chosen by the very controversial Minister of Militia and Defence Sam Hughes (of Ross Rifle fame) over other more suitable camps, causing a stir. The camp was used to train successive drafts of troops and has been a military base since the Great War. The spot used by the First Contingent to train is now the heliport for 430 Tactical Helicopter Squadron and what bothers me the most is that no one has thought to erect a monument to mark the location.

'The next pair of photographs was taken at Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario. Fort Henry was built in the 1840s to help deter the Americans from attacking Kingston, which was the seat of power at the time. After the Imperial troops pulled out of Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the fort was left to fall slowly into a state of disrepair. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, several works projects were initiated to rebuild some of the old historic forts which were in ruins across Canada. One of these, Fort Henry, was rebuilt in the late 1930s and was opened by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1938.

'With World War Two starting in 1939, it was decided to use Fort Henry as a PoW camp, primarily for Luftwaffe personnel captured during the Battle of Britain. The fort was not really suitable for use as a PoW camp as it lacked many of the essential elements of a prison, such as good fields of vision and security, proper heating, and it was just across the St Lawrence River from the then-neutral United States. There were some very interesting escapes from the camp by its industrious inmates.

'Fort Henry is now a very popular tourist attraction which is administered by the St Lawrence Parks Commission. During the summer the Fort houses a company of fully dressed and trained re-enactors who provide drill and tactics demonstrations. Many of the associated tradesmen and other "camp followers" are also present, revealing life in Fort Henry at the time of Confederation, 1867. The fort also houses a superior museum covering the history of the fort and the units which garrisoned it.'



'The central parade square from the north face as seen during World War II when it was a PoW camp for Luftwaffe personnel. Note the artillery is still in place and temporary buildings have been erected on the parade square.'



'My view of the parade square of Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario, in June 1988. Remove the bleachers [North Americans for spectator stands] and add a temporary building and little has changed. All the artillery is operable.'

Our long-time reader John Margreiter, of Chesterfield, Missouri, ex-23rd Armored Infantry, 7th Armored Division, sent this photo of himself 'beside the old Dutch pillbox we attacked on October 16, 1944. This is the second such "bunker" on the Deurne Canal south of the Deurne-Venray highway, and the defect in the concrete was caused by a 75mm shell from one of our tanks. There were *no* trees in this area in 1944, and it was like attacking 2,000 yards across a billiard table. There is still a four-foot dike just out of the photo on the right; it was originally right on the canal bank, as can be seen by the diagonal line on the corner of the pillbox. It was moved some time after the war in order to make the cart track you can see.

'After the British attack through our bridgehead and on to IJsselstein on October 17, we fought south through the swamp on the other (east) side of the canal to Griendtsveen and occupied that village, losing heavily again on that day.

'I might mention that most of these pillboxes I have seen were filled with cement and bricks by the Germans after May 10, 1940. We thought that we were getting fire from this one, but when we arrived at the canal (having gone the last 150 yards through a mortar smoke screen, courtesy of HQ Company of the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion — were it not for that we would still be pinned down out there), we learned that the Germans had tunnelled into the dike and were shooting at us through "loop-holes". There could not have been more than two or three squads of them, but they really made us pay a price. I was creased on my right buttock by a bullet which went through my right hip pocket and destroyed the K-ration which resided therein.'

In our last editorial round-up in issue 72, I included a picture of Medal of Honor hero Rodger Young in Ohio. A reader in the States (who failed to give me his name) wrote in June 1992 informing me of a ballad entitled *Rodger Young* by Pfc Frank Loesser of the US Special Services Division. As there is strict copyright on reproducing sheet music, readers interested should contact the publisher, Bob Miller Inc., 1619 Broadway, New York.



John Margreiter shares wartime memories with Doris beside the Deurne Canal.

In March 1992, Erwin F. Sieche of Vienna sent us an interesting photo: 'During a recent trip to India, I took a harbour ferry at Bombay (see issue 64). Directly in front of the Indian Naval Arsenal lies a tiny island

which I believe is Cross Island. In fact, this islet is now a complete building armed with some 4cm Bofors AA guns and three saluting guns. On the southern coast apparently older guns have been dumped into the sea.'



Cross Island, Bombay Harbour. Picture taken in February 1992 by Erwin Sieche.



The British plot at Oak Ridge Cemetery.

Larry Hebach kindly sent photos of the cemetery in the 'old cow town of Arcadia, Florida, where 23 RAF cadets who died during WWII exercises are buried. The locals keep the cemetery "neat as a pin" and hold annual ceremonies for these young lads.'



Also seen in India. David Green, our Peleliu author, could not resist sending this picture of a sign he spotted in Jaisalmer, India. The swastika (from the Sanskrit meaning 'conducive to well-being') is a symbol of prosperity and good fortune and is widely used by Hindus and Buddhists. Amongst the Jainas, the arms of the swastika are a reminder of the four possible places of rebirth: the animal/plant world; on earth; in the spirit world, or in hell. It is also used to mark thresholds and doors and also the opening pages of account books, so after the turmoil created by the imposition of Europe-wide Value Added Tax in January 1993, I reckon we should use it as our own greeting to the VATman!



Nearer to home, Armand Vertongen of Brussels sent in these pictures of German painted signs still extant near Grimbergen airfield north of the city. Armand says that the aerodrome was used by the Luftwaffe and that the Germans painted directions

with distances between two cities on the walls of houses as any signs erected on posts were always being removed by the Resistance. The third picture shows an Allied inscription for the 'HQ 33rd Engineers'.

Dr Peter Schenk (who contributed the feature on Operation 'Sealion' in issue 69) wrote to say that he had learnt of the preservation of a ferry lighter of the type developed for later landings. Peter writes that 'with the start of the campaign in Africa in 1941, the German Army had a need for small landing craft. Designs for new landing craft had already been made for 'Sealion' and it was found that these were equally feasible for use in North Africa.

'One of the landing craft types selected for use was the Marine-Fährprahm, a navy-developed ferry lighter, designed along the lines of the river barges used in the preparations for 'Sealion', but featuring the essential requirements of a modern landing craft, such as a double bottom and walls, and a hinged bow ramp. Propulsion was by three lorry engines. Of sturdy construction, each barge was capable of carrying three tanks. This type was put into mass production and saw service in Norway, the Baltic and Black Sea, the Channel and in the Mediterranean.

'The transfer of the vessels to the more distant theatres of war posed a special problem, but this was solved by various ways of overland transport. In order to reach the Black Sea, craft were transported from the River Elbe to the Danube via the autobahn; craft destined for Africa were section-built in Germany and assembled in Italian yards.

'When the invasion of Malta was planned in 1942, the Italian Navy decided to build their own ferry lighters, following German designs, which they called 'Motozattere', i.e. motor rafts. Some 65 were built between February and July 1942 (*MZ 701-765*), and more (of a slightly modified type) followed from September to March 1943. These were then used on the run from Italy to North Africa and from Tripoli to the front.

'After the Italian capitulation in September 1943, some vessels were seized by the German Navy and, after the war, the Italian Navy put the surviving craft back into service again. They saw a long and fruitful existence, the last units only being scrapped in the 1980s.

'Recently', says Peter, 'one of these vessels, *MTC 1005*, the former *MZ 737* which had not been in German service, was ceded by the Italian Navy to a group of naval historians, including Commodore Erminio Bagnasco (ret.), who are now trying to raise the necessary funds to preserve her on land in the Naval Museum in Venice.'



Above: Motozattere being fitted out in Italy and, below, *MTC 1005* in Venice before it was handed over for preservation.





Sergeant Kevin Greenhalgh of the 2 RTR (promoted since issue 72) sent a fascinating album of photographs showing the destruction of the Compiègne surrender site in 1940. They were given to him by ex-Sapper F. T. Wooldridge who found them in a house in Lüneburg at the end of the war.



There are 36 pictures altogether in the album 'liberated' from Lüneburg by Sapper Wooldridge (above left). Although the photographs are uncaptioned, a copy of an order dated July 15, 1940 from 170. Infanterie-Division to Infanterie-Regiment 391 states that 'The division has been charged with the demolition of the stones at Compiègne. Arriving there from Higher Command XXXII will probably be the Higher Engineer Officer, Hauptmann Quandt. On orders of Higher Command XXXII, he is to be told that photographs are to be taken before, during and after the demolition.'



We have not come across this series of photographs in any of the official archives holding German material so they may well be unique. Selected frames from the roll are reproduced here. As much as Compiègne, dedicated in 1922 and created a national memorial ten years later, was revered by the French, it was hated by the Germans, and Hitler lost no time in



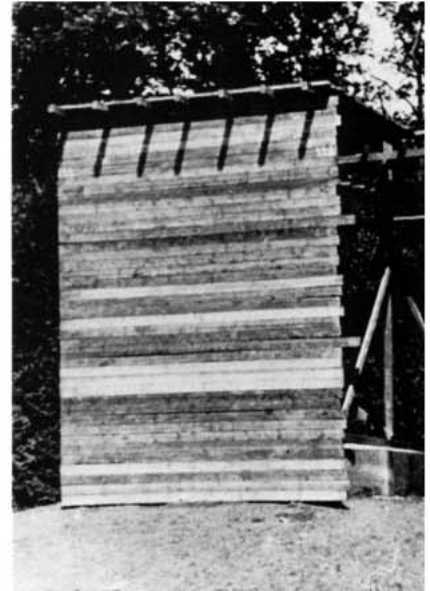
demolishing all the structures. (Full details of the events in June 1940 when Hitler turned the tables on the French are included in *Blitzkrieg in the West Then and Now*.) The site had six main features. In the two pictures above, the pioneers tackle the marble slab which marked the exact spot where Maréchal Foch's coach stood in November 1918.



Meanwhile, other troops are covering over the central memorial with its objectionable wording: 'Here on the Eleventh of November 1918 succumbed the criminal pride of the German Empire — vanquished by the free peoples which it tried to

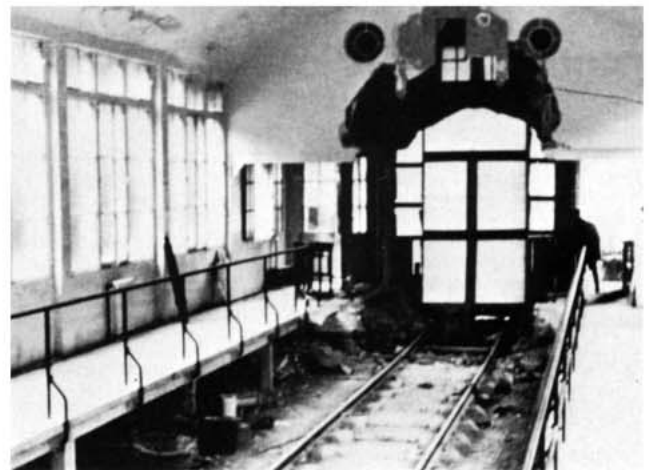


enslave'. The statue of Maréchal Foch can be seen in the background of the picture on the left, with the building specially constructed to house his coach being visible in the left rear of the photo right.



Left: This frame shows stonework being buried — Sergeant Greenhalgh wonders if the actual pieces were ever recovered. *Centre:* The Alsace-Lorraine Memorial, with the German eagle impaled on a sword, commemorated those French soldiers who fought to reconquer this contended territory on the border with Germany in 1914–18. France lost this large German-speaking area after her defeat in 1871 when it was incorporated into the German Empire. This caused much anti-German feeling and,

although some 160,000 of the French-speaking inhabitants emigrated, the territory was returned to France in 1919. Hitler re-annexed it after 1940 but it reverted once again in 1945, becoming the present French départements of Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin and Moselle. The monument had been covered by the German National War Flag for the armistice and was now protected *(right)* from flying debris from the forthcoming explosion. Later it was dismantled and taken to Germany.



Explosives were to be used to demolish the museum building, the construction of which had been financed by an American benefactor, Arthur H. Fleming, in 1927. This had been built to house Foch's *Compagnie des Wagons Lits* coach that the Germans had already taken to Berlin by road to display as a

trophy. *Above left:* Although it appears in this photograph that the building is undamaged, the picture *above right* shows how the centre of the end wall has been torn down to get the coach out, and temporarily boarded up again for the more recent signing ceremony.



Left: On the left, the Foch statue has been sandbagged to shield it from the blast of the demolition of the museum building *right*.



Ernst Kümmerling: 'Here I found the emblem of the saloon carriage of Compiègne, together with these letters. . . . The SS set fire to it there . . . I watched it from the window. The



carriage was burning, and when a carriage like that burns it is a big fire. They added [fuel] to it [several] times.' Conclusive evidence on German TV of the final fate of the Foch coach.

While on the subject of Compiègne, after the French armistice in 1940, the Wagon-Lits coach was taken by road to Berlin (see *Blitzkrieg in the West Then and Now*) as a victory trophy and displayed in the Lustgarten. In 1945, it was moved south and disappeared in the Elsterwerda/Grossenhain area of eastern Germany. No one really knew its ultimate fate until ZDF TV in Germany broadcast a programme about Führerhauptquartier 'Olga' in Thuringia in October 1991, a recording of which was kindly sent to me by Jan Brugge of Hilversum. Although the HQ was never used or visited by Hitler, the programme makers showed an interview with a local, Ernst Kümmerling, in Jonastal who showed the camera two of the iron letters from the side of the coach which he said had been destroyed by the SS.

Richard Raiber, our Führer HQ expert from Delaware (see issues 19 and 66) also brought us up to date with his more recent research:

'I believe you are already aware that the Thuringian Führerhauptquartier Anlage [complex], construction of which began in March 1945, was not at Ohrdruf but rather in a cave system blasted out of the side of a mountain at Jonastal, north of the Wilde Weisse Fluss, between Ohrdruf and Arnstadt. Its code name is unknown to me at this time. Although I have no documentary proof, I assume OKW, at least its WFS component, would have been in the bunkers under the Truppenübungsplatz at Ohrdruf ("Olga") if Hitler had come to "Raum Olga" from Berlin in spring 1945.

'Good evidence now exists that the Führerhauptquartier built in autumn 1939/ winter 1940 in the centre of Germany's western frontier was at Glans-Münchweiler in the Pfalz. This small hamlet is just north of Ramstein AFB. I know nothing more about it. This is not to be confused with Anlage "Mitte" built near Spala, south-west of Warsaw, Poland, in 1940/1941.

'Incontestable documentary evidence has been brought to my attention that Anlage "W 3" was not another code-name for "Brunhilde", as I had assumed: "W 3" was actually a third Führerhauptquartier, built in autumn 1942/early 1943 in the Tours/Vendome region of central western France. This is an Anlage previously unknown to me, which flatly contradicts Albert Speer's categorical statement in his memoirs that only "W 2" at Margival and one other Führerhauptquartier (unidentified by Speer) were ever constructed in France. There had been no justifiable reason for me to dispute Speer: if documentary proof existed for a "W 2", "Brunhilde", and "W 3", and he, who ought to have known, said only one other than "W 2", at Margival, had been built in

France, then "Brunhilde"/"W 3" must have been the second, I have long believed. What we have here is still another example of the unreliability of unsupported "eye-witness evidence". That Anlage "W 3" existed in the Tours/Vendome area must be one of the best-kept post-war French secrets. The local denizens *must* know about it; why have no accounts concerning it surfaced? It is likely the Germans blew up the "Hitler bunker" there, but enough ruin would have remained after the last Germans departed to indicate its historical significance. I do not know its precise location nor anything more about it, except that Hitler insisted the Ausgang of the bunker at "W 3" not open into a wooden annexe, because of the danger that fire in the latter could obstruct escape from the bunker.'

The on-going story of the death of Hitler and Co., and the disposal of the remains, continues to excite the media. Revelations in *Izvestia* on February 18, 1993, backed up with a film sequence on Russian TV, indicated that a bullet-holed fragment of Hitler's skull had been found in a cardboard box in the basement of the Russian State Archive. Mr Sergei Mironenko, who had taken charge of the archive in the summer of 1992, was reported to have stated that 'tests that have been carried out recently . . . make it absolutely out of the question that all traces of [Hitler's] body were destroyed'.

We have always expected the teeth and

jawbone to surface at some stage as those items of forensic evidence were removed from the corpse during the autopsy in 1945. They were handed over to the SMERSH Section of the 3rd Shock Army and, one presumes, would have been preserved in a pathological institute or by the KGB in its museum. Therefore, it was surprising that the item displayed by Mr Mironenko was a piece of skull although not necessarily suspicious as the autopsy report states: 'Part of the cranium is missing'. Lev Bezymenski in *The Death of Adolf Hitler* added a footnote that 'at a somewhat later date occipital parts of a cranium were found *quite probably* (my italics) belonging to Hitler's corpse'.

So, if the bullet-holed fragment of skull shown on TV did belong to Hitler, its convenient absence during the autopsy neatly avoided the necessity of stating that Hitler had committed suicide by shooting — a seeming anathema to the Soviets at the time. Instead, the pathologists reported that death was due to cyanide poisoning stating that remains of a crushed glass ampoule had been found in the mouth.

Also shown in the Russian film was a piece of wood, purported to have come from the sofa on which the suicide had taken place. However, just a month earlier, Ben Swearingen of Lewisville, Texas, (who contributed the piece on Göring's suicide in issue 44) had upstaged the Russians. I will let Ben tell the story in his own words.





'THE BEST' WAR SOUVENIR

'At approximately 3.30 p.m. on the afternoon of April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler and his wife, the former Eva Braun, committed suicide in the bunker under the Reichskanzlei in Berlin. Frau Hitler killed herself with poison, and her husband fired a bullet into his brain. As his head lolled to one side, blood spurted onto the armrest of the sofa on which he was sitting, staining its wood and upholstery.

'The sofa remained in the bunker long after their suicides, and the July 23, 1945, issue of *LIFE* contained a picture of three journalists examining this sofa [see issue 66 page 43]. (Based upon erroneous information, *LIFE's* caption to the picture speculated that the blood might have been Eva Braun's.) Some years ago, I contacted one of the journalists shown in the *LIFE* picture, hoping that he had perhaps succumbed to the temptation to cut a swatch of bloody fabric from the sofa. He said that the thought had occurred to him, but he had not done so. "I wish now that I had", he said. "That would have been a great souvenir." "The best!" I remember replying.

'I thought then, when speaking with the journalist, that a bloodstained piece of the fabric from the sofa on which Hitler sat when he killed himself would have been "the best" souvenir of World War II. And I still do, now that I have acquired one.

'Shortly after the end of the war in Europe, Julian Richards (a pseudonym) was stationed in Berlin with the 3217th Signal Service Battalion. At the time, the American soldiers were still on fairly friendly terms with the Russians, and a pack of cigarettes was the key to almost anything. In late August or early September of 1945, Richards visited the bombed-out Reichskanzlei where he encountered an obliging Russian soldier. In return for a present of cigarettes, the Russian agreed to show Richards through the ruins of the Chancellery and the bunker in which Hitler had killed himself. The bunker was "dark, mouldy and smelled burnt", Richards recalled. By the glow of a cigarette lighter, Richards inspected a sofa in one of the bunker rooms. "The sofa had a

distinctive pattern of reindeer, flowers and curiously-garbed figures." It appeared to Richards to be heavily bloodstained in the

area of the armrest, but he had no idea whose blood it was. After the two ascended from the bunker, the Russian handed Richards a piece of stained fabric, obviously cut from the sofa. Grinning as he held out the swatch of cloth, the Russian said, "Hitler kaput!" Richards looked at the piece of fabric, and pocketed it simply as a souvenir of his visit to the bunker.

'Richards did not recognise the significance of the piece of fabric until he returned to the United States, where he saw the copy of *LIFE* containing a picture of the sofa that he had seen in the bunker. Though the caption indicated that the blood on the sofa may have been Eva Braun's, Richards knew that it had been subsequently determined that only Hitler had shot himself, and that the stains on the piece of fabric, if blood, could only be that of the German Führer.

'Some years later, Richards allowed a scientific examination to be made of one of the stains on the fabric that the Russian soldier had given him. The examination determined that "the area of stained cloth examined contained a human bloodstain". Further, the report stated that microscopical examination of the swatch revealed "apparent bits of tissue adhering to the fibers of the cloth". What Richards had long suspected was confirmed by the report: the piece of fabric from the sofa was stained with Adolf Hitler's blood.

'In January 1993, this piece of fabric came into my possession. With it came full documentation: Richards' two-page, signed and notarised statement, a signed and notarised 8in. x 10in. color photograph of the piece of fabric which is cream with the motif in light and dark blue, a photograph of Richards and the Russian soldier, and a video tape of Richards displaying the piece of fabric, and explaining how he obtained it.'





The Iron Curtain may have fallen in eastern Europe, but I could not resist including these two shots. Guess where? In the last issue, I visited all the various sites used for mustard gas production in the UK but, as is sometimes the case, I had to finalise the layout for page 25 before I had taken the photographs. (Any readers who are graphic designers will say that I am mad — which is possibly true — but sometimes it is necessary to do things in reverse order.) Anyway, it meant that I had only left space for two pictures of the Barnham site in

Exclamation Spinney and I felt it was more important to illustrate the entrance. But just look at the rear: an absolute copy of the Iron Curtain — in Suffolk! The first line of defence was provided by rolls of dannert barbed wire on the picket posts in the foreground. Then the chain-link fence topped with more barbed wire behind which lies the raked strip with patrol road and overhead lights and watchtowers — just like the real thing. Beyond that stands the inner concrete block wall surrounding the nuclear bomb store itself. Really amazing!

The signing of the Four-plus-Two treaty in Moscow on September 12, 1990, approving the reunification of Germany, led to the ending of the military occupation of Berlin at midnight on October 2, thus marking the final end of the Second World War in Europe. This, in turn, has led to the opening up of many historic sites in eastern Germany and it also gave us the opportunity to produce *Berlin Then and Now*. This project had been on the back burner for some 15 years as it had proved impossible to take the necessary comparisons in East Germany while the Communist regime was in power.

Following an initial photographic trip to Berlin in August 1990, I was recommended to contact an ex-Royal Corps of Military Police officer, Tony Le Tissier, by a mutual friend who told me that Tony, who still lived in Berlin, was the expert on the battle for the

city. I made contact with Tony later that year and he agreed to author our book although he made no mention of the fact that he had served at Spandau Allied Prison. Readers can therefore imagine my amazement to discover some months later that not only had Tony been the British Military Governor there, but that his term of office covered the Hess suicide and the subsequent dismantling of the prison!

At our next meeting, I reproached Tony for not telling me, but he said that he thought I knew already and he was somewhat surprised that I had not brought the subject up! Anyway, it turned out that Tony was the person directly responsible for disposing of Hess' flying suit and personal possessions. Although the authorities were later accused of destroying evidence, Tony explained that it had previously been agreed by the Four

Powers that all would be destroyed on Hess' death. Tony assisted in piling everything into the converted container which had served Hess as a summer house in the prison grounds, and in which he had strangled himself with a light flex, and he then set fire to the lot. Tony was later able to get pictures of the hut released from Special Investigation Branch files for publication in *Berlin Then and Now*.

With the approach of the 50th anniversary of Hess' flight to Britain, Christopher Elliott, who owns the oxygen mask once worn by Hess, decided to visit Floors Farm, near Glasgow, for the first time. On May 10, 1991, he was pictured with the mask at the spot where Hess parachuted to earth, having previously refused to hand over the mask to the British authorities who demanded its return in 1988 (see issue 66).



Left: Christopher Elliott brought the Rudolf Hess saga full circle when he returned to Floors Farm near Glasgow on the 50th anniversary of the Deputy Führer's arrival in Scotland, together with the oxygen mask that Hess was wearing at the time. The stone on which it rests reputedly marks the exact spot where his boot hit the ground. This is the only personal item of Hess' flying clothing which survives, as our author, Tony le Tissier, burned the rest of it in this converted Portakabin (right), in which Hess had committed suicide, in the grounds of Spandau Military Prison in Berlin.

'It was a most memorable and moving



This was the source of all the fuss in July 1991 over the reported discovery of Carin Göring's remains at Carinhall. This article was published in the July 11 edition of *Super Illu*, the basic theme of which place the magazine firmly in the 'tit and bum' category.

A number of readers, inspired by our feature on Göring's estate published in February 1991 in issue 71, have since visited Carinhall, formerly in a restricted area of East Germany. Readers will recall that Göring's wife, Carin, had been buried in a specially-constructed tomb overlooking the lake and her remains were found after the war and taken to her native Sweden. Thus it was with considerable interest that we read the following news report from Reuters on July 10, 1991: 'Treasure-hunters seeking valuables hidden by the Nazis have found the body, in a zinc coffin, of the Swedish first wife of Hermann Göring, it was reported yesterday. She died in 1931.'



That same day, our Carinhall author, Courtney West, 'phoned from Washington to say he had just heard the news via his fiancée, Birgitta von Rosen (Göring's niece). His information was that, subsequent to our story being published, 'the curiosity-seekers have descended en masse. Someone digging in the area of the tomb discovered a mummified corpse.' Further enquiries to our ex-Stasi guide revealed that 'there are foreigners (English?) digging all over the place'.

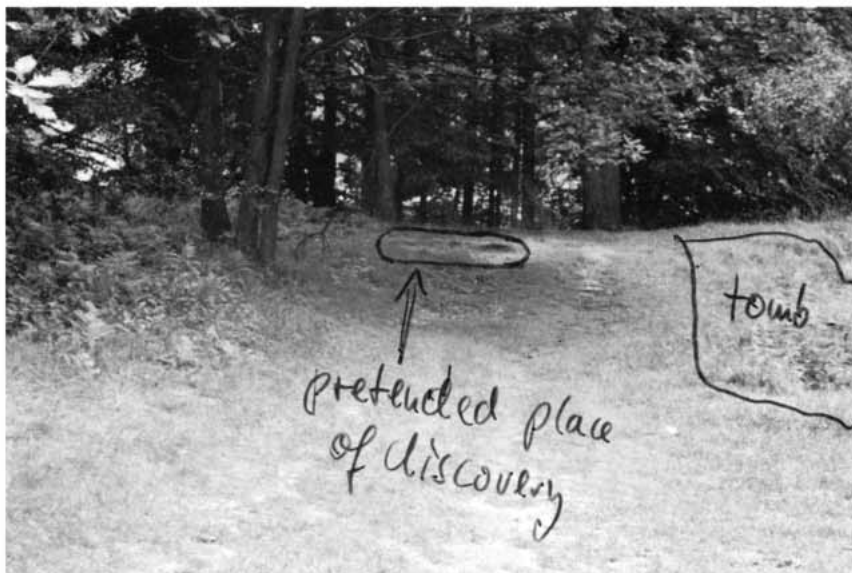
At the same time, several readers 'phoned to tell us that we had got it wrong and that Carin was not buried in Sweden.

We immediately despatched our sleuth in northern Germany, Jan Heitmann, to make on-the-spot investigations. He discovered that the story had first surfaced in the *Super Illu* magazine, recently launched only for readers in the former DDR. It reported that treasure-hunters from Cologne had found 'valuable art treasures, sculptures, silver bowls and candlesticks' and also 'the zinc coffin of Carin Göring' containing 'the skeleton of a woman'. However, the magazine said that the treasure-hunters told them that 'We hid the coffin in the ground again, but the next morning it had disappeared.'

Jan found that the facts were somewhat different: 'We met a young boy, Enrico (14-15 years old), from Friedrichswalde who was a perfect guide because he knows the area like the back of his hand and his grandfather was the commanding officer of Göring's guard. His grandmother also worked at Carinhall.

'Since your visit in 1990, the area really has become a tourist attraction, but in Spring 1991 it was a Sperrgebiet (prohibited zone) again. The police decided to close the area because it had never been properly cleared of ammunition after the war. Police pyrotechnicians recovered some shells and mines and the area was made accessible to the public soon afterwards. But it is still dangerous to walk around because of the ammunition which is still lying on the surface and buried below ground. (Enrico showed us a Tellermine which was covered by nettles on the mausoleum steps.) There are also many dead soldiers still buried in the area who were interred by forest workers at the places where they were found. These graves were not marked. Near the stone sentry boxes there is an unmarked mass grave which contains approximately 80 bodies.

'Some weeks ago, Enrico entered the tomb through a narrow opening. He told us



Jan Heitmann's pictures taken on Saturday, July 13. Young Enrico pointing out the excavation some 10-15 feet from the sealed entrance to the tomb.



Left: The headline on the *Super Illu* article proclaims 'Göring's treasure recovered'. Jan commented to me that 'Enrico holds the only treasure we could find: a tin for grilled herring. I know that Göring liked herring. But did he also like grilled herring?'



Right: A piece of carpet found in a recently-discovered underground bunker. Enrico told Jan that many people in Friedrichswalde have pieces of this carpet in their homes which once lay on the floor of the Great Hall at Carinhall.



that there are still some iron candlesticks and the rack on which the sarcophagus once rested. (I tried to get into the tomb too, but a large stone now covers the opening.)

'No one at Friedrichswalde believes the *Super Illu* story and no one believes that the diggers really found the silver dishes at Carinhall because everything of value was removed by the locals shortly after the war. According to the people, the legendary Göring treasure does not exist. Several pressmen from local newspapers and a team from SFB Television in Berlin had already visited the site, and the TV people even showed Enrico a video which showed the 'coffin' to be more like an old zinc bath tub.

'We went to the supposed place of discovery of the human remains. It is 3-5 metres to the left of the mausoleum. The tomb itself and the steps seem to be untouched. There is a flatish hole approximately 15-20 centimetres deep but it is too small to accommodate a huge sarcophagus. Enrico told us that this hole had already been there for several months, although it had obviously been recently enlarged. If the diggers really found a skeleton on that spot (which I doubt), it was most probably the remains of one of the soldiers, and the object which they believe to be Carin's zinc coffin was probably an ordinary bath tub.

'Enrico also pointed out the spacious tunnel-like underground shelter system. Some weeks before, Enrico and a digger followed the tunnel for about a hundred metres. In some places the passage is very narrow because parts of the ceiling have collapsed. The tunnel leads to the main air-raid shelter, the "Zuckerhut" (sugar-loaf). This shelter once had a watch-tower which was destroyed. As the tower looked like a sugar-loaf, this is the reason why the shelter got its name. The extensive drainage system which runs up to 30 metres below ground also still exists. One man told us that he crawled through a part of this system and that he found Göring's swimming pool (if this is true?).

'We also discovered that local people cut up the original sarcophagus and shared out the pieces. Some were made into utensils, and we were told that one Friedrichswalde family still has a bucket with a carved 'C' on it made out of the top of the coffin.'

The reader who travelled the furthest to see Carinhall was most probably Miguel Gonzalez-Hermosillo of Mexico City who visited east Germany in the summer of 1991, inspired partly because 'my father-in-law at 17 saw service late in 1944 and early 1945 in the "Hermann-Göring" Panzergrenadier-Division on the Eastern Front until he was caught by the Russians in the "Fortress" at Breslau — then in Germany but now Polish

John Hearne from Slough, Berkshire, sent these photos following his visit to Carinhall in August 1991: 'I took the train from Berlin to Eberswalde and then a local branch line to Friedrichswalde. I then walked from the station to Carinhall which took me about 1½ hours. I must admit I was a bit lost when I reached the area, but to my surprise I found a couple by the lake and they spoke a little English. They were very interested in my *After the Battle* magazine and showed me the bunker and various other places. The hole to the bunker was very small. I think I could have made it inside just but I thought better of it as I had no torch. They say the area is very popular at weekends and you can see many places where people have been digging. Also they said at certain weekends neo-Nazis come to the area and light huge fires where they camp down. This couple were not quite sure about where the mausoleum was, so after an hour with them I set off towards the Wückersee and there I saw a group of people. They also had a very intense look at *ATB* and took me to the exact place of Carin's mausoleum. Again, language was a slight problem as very few people in eastern Germany speak English but, with the little German I know, we managed to get by. The person in the photo holding the metal plate said that when he was young he could get inside the mausoleum. The entrance you see in the photo does not lead anywhere, but there is a small entrance into the mausoleum where a young person or child could probably get into. Again there were many places where people have been digging. The whole area had quite an effect on me and nearly brings tears to your eyes when you learn what went on here. It is also a very beautiful area and I hope it never gets spoilt!'

Wrocław — with its consequences of imprisonment. Since I myself spent a couple of years as a student on an international law post-graduate programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science,

coupled with my "in law" service with the HG Division, your article "revisiting Carinhall" prompted a field study visit to Joachimsthal and Friedrichswalde searching for Göring's traces.'

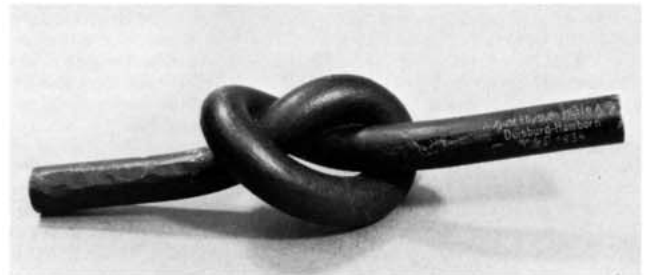


Miguel Gonzalez-Hermosillo went to Carinhall too and also visited the grave of Alois and Klara Hitler in the municipal cemetery at Leonding, on the outskirts of Linz in Austria, musing — 'I wonder if this is the first time that Hitler's parents' grave has been visited by Mexicans!'



Before we leave the subject of Hitler, readers will probably be interested to see these photographs sent by our man in Moscow, Nikolai Bodrikhin, of items preserved in the Central

Museum of the Red Army. Nikolai says that Hitler's uniform jacket with its burn marks has never been put on display, nor has this armband with Hitler's name on the reverse.



Nikolai says that most of the trophies from the Berlin Chancellery were acquired by the then-deputy head of the museum, Lieutenant-Colonel P. N. Loginov, and that the current specialist of the reserve collection, Mrs L. Gorbacheva, says that little is known of the provenance or history of specific items. (According to Andrew Mollo, our Third Reich expert, he found and identified Heinz Linge's bloodstained jacket in the uniform collection at the museum many years ago by checking the wearer's name tag in the pocket. The Russians had no idea that

this jacket had been worn by the man who had carried Hitler, head first, from the bunker and Andrew didn't enlighten them!) Above left: Hitler-headed violin, believed a gift from Mussolini, and above right an iron knot presented to Hitler by the August Thyssen organisation in 1934. Below left: Gift of the Junkers company on Hitler's 50th birthday. Centre: Eagle to commemorate his visit to Italy in May 1938 and, below right, a globe of the world as envisaged by Italian fascists, comprising only Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan . . . and America!





Russia is obviously a huge untapped source of World War II relics and memorabilia, but the difficulties faced by the would-be collector are enormous, as Rupert Wilbraham found out. In January 1992, acting on information received, he located an almost intact FW 190 in a forest some 50 miles outside Leningrad (now St Petersburg) which had made some sort of emergency landing during the siege. He secured finance to bring the aircraft to Britain through the East-West Creative



Association, set up jointly with the Russians by Central Television, who were interested in making a documentary of the project. However, no sooner had he celebrated his coup (left) than word leaked out, and a saga of intrigue, bribery and sabotage began before the Focke-Wulf was finally airlifted to safety. Unfortunately, various complications make it now extremely unlikely that the documentary of this unique discovery will now be completed.

Peenemünde was another location in East Germany which became accessible in 1990 and, following up Jan Heitmann's feature in issue 74, Stanley Potter wrote in January 1992 from Aberdeen:

'In 1945, I was a captain in 110 LAA Battery stationed near Munster in West Germany (the small Munster by Lüneburg Heath, not the larger Münster to the north-west). On June 13, 1945, my troop received word that a volunteer party was required for a special top-secret mission. Subsequently, I reported to RHQ at 1830 hours with a Jeep and a driver and two 3-ton lorries with a digging party of twelve men. I was introduced to two German officers, dressed exactly as those on page 1 of your article. One was an interpreter and the other I understood to be von Braun.' [Most probably not him as von Braun was captured at Oberjoch near Oberammergau in southern Germany by the US 7th Army on May 2 and immediately shipped off to the United States. Ed.]

'We set forth northwards, leaving Lüneburg Heath to the east and crossing the west of Hamburg over tracks bulldozed by the REs through piles of rubble. On the way, the interpreter informed me that we were going to recover the prototype of the latest German rocket, for they feared it might fall into the possession of the Russians, whom they understood had already advanced further west than expected, and that German orders were that rather than fall into Russian hands it should be handed to the Allied forces. This was true for we knew not how near the Russians were.

'Somewhere south of Lübeck, we turned east along a small road and around midnight came to a lych-gate from whence a small path led up to the door of a church. Our torches lit up three graves to the left of the path marked with three new crosses. I remember the ranks and of course the dates but not the names:

Oberleut ***** 1945
Leutnant ***** 1945
Oberleut ***** 1945

'Under instruction from the Germans, my men soon uncovered three coffins, shallowly buried, which we soon transferred to the lorries. The graves were then filled in and the crosses replaced. Every effort was made to hide all signs of disturbance, though I have often wondered what thoughts the local minister had when next morning he must have viewed obvious signs of desecration; working by torchlight must have left many signs of our visitation.

'At that time, I thought Peenemünde to be

just over the rise to the north of the church on the Baltic shore, but now from your map I realise that we were some two hundred kilometres to the east of Peenemünde, being south of Lübeck Bay on the Baltic, whereas Peenemünde is on the Baltic by Pomeranian Bay. This distance explains the anxiety of the Germans to remove their valuable rocket beyond any fear of discovery by the Russians.

'Our mission now accomplished, we departed around 0300 hours and arrived safely back by 0700 hours on June 14. That afternoon we were invited to see the results of our efforts. Spread out in the courtyard were the contents of the coffins: the complete parts of the latest rocket carefully wrapped, sealed and numbered with German thoroughness.

'Later that week von Braun [?] and his rocket were flown to Farnborough and later to the United States. Thus was the seed sown which eventually helped the USA to beat the USSR in the race to the moon.'

Peter Mangerian of Fairport, New York, wrote in August 1991 telling us of a trip he had made through eastern Europe. 'The East Bloc is the new frontier so, in February 1990, I headed to the most readily available area, not far from where I was stationed with the US Army near Nürnberg. After some research, I found that the last significant battle south of Berlin was fought north of Ostrava in Czechoslovakia (west of Prague). On a

long weekend I ventured there. A nice museum including old and new vehicles is located between Opava and Ostrava. Some fierce battles were fought in this area, and with maps in hand and some info gained locally, I searched the wooded hills. Very little to be found. Certainly no relics, but some trenches and foxholes. I went further north to find the belt of bunkers built by the Czechs in the late 1930s along the Polish-Czech border and found them relatively intact. Mostly small two-room bunkers but also one very large two-storey casemate, pocked heavily by tank rounds. A painting at the museum I had visited earlier was still in mind. It showed Russian tanks firing point-blank at some large bunker. There is some typical exaggeration in the Soviet depiction of the battle, but I think the resistance was fierce, the pock-marks being clear evidence. Again, no relics, but the view from the ridge where the bunkers were built clearly shows the flat southern Polish plains which the Soviets crossed to enter the hilly countryside of north central Czechoslovakia. Local hiking maps were helpful.

'I crossed into Poland for a quick jaunt in the former state of Silesia. Breslau was bypassed and besieged by the Red Army. I didn't have any references on hand but searched the countryside expecting some success. Again, nothing, not even foxholes, etc.'



Shell-scarred bunker at Ostrava, seen by Peter Mangerian during a trip to Czechoslovakia.



Above: Nice nostalgic then and now: Hawkinge, 1937–1990. Below: Roy with his father at the wreck of the first German aircraft down in Britain.

'I have recently read, for the first time, some of your "Then and Now" publications,' wrote Roy Chadwell from Felixstowe in November 1991, 'and the section on Hawkinge in your *Battle of Britain* book was of great interest and has prompted me to write. My father, the late Group Captain Bernard Chadwell, was stationed at Hawkinge from 1933–1939 as No. 25 Squadron, and later Station Accountant Officer. A posting of six years at one station, pre-war, was most unusual — it may still be! The house in which we lived was then No. 2, Officers' Married Quarters.

'When I visited Hawkinge for the first time in over 50 years — to see the Kent Battle of Britain Museum on September 15, 1990 — I tried to catch a bit of 'Then and Now' atmosphere by having a photo taken on the same spot where I had been pictured in 1937–38 under the starboard wing of a visiting Handley Page Heyford that was parked outside our house — on the right of the picture.

'As a small boy living on an aerodrome, I was enthralled with all the activity. I was able to wander freely, chatting with the pilots and mechanics, whilst sitting in the cockpits of all the different types of aircraft — Fury, Audax, Lysander, Blenheim. Talking with the crew of the fire tender (almost outside our front door!) was another of my favourite pastimes. I wish I had then had my present interest in photography!

'In early 1939, my father was posted to Drem and the family moved to North Berwick. Of course, when the "Humbie Heinkel" was shot down in October we all had to go and have a look. The little boy in the mac, back to the camera, in your picture on page 30 of issue 42 is me! I enclose another of myself together with my father that appeared at the time in *The Scotsman*. I was also able to have a rummage round the



Heinkel 111 that came down near North Berwick on 9th February, 1940 [see *The Blitz Then and Now, Volume 1*, page 68]. Both aircraft were shot down by pilot colleagues of my father, so I had no difficulty obtaining access to them, in his presence. The next posting he had was in 1940 to HQ Fighter Command at Stanmore. I wish he was able to fill in a few blanks for me.'

While on the subject of the Battle of Britain, during a telephone conversation recently with Brad King of the Imperial War Museum's Department of Film, he told me that he had spotted a remarkable camera gun sequence taken on September 18, 1940. In

The Battle of Britain Then and Now we listed a 302 Squadron Hurricane, P3086, as 'believed hit by debris from a Ju 88 engaged over the Chelmsford area, 5.40 p.m. Crash-landed at Sandon Lodge Farm, Danbury. Sergeant E. Paterek unhurt.'

The identification letters of No. 302 Squadron, based at Northolt, were WX, and the full sequence clearly shows Sergeant Wedzik attacking the fellow Hurricane pilot — not once but over and over again! These camera gun compilations were used as training aids — one relishes the thought of the comments of the instructor as he screened Combat Film No. 145.



EXECUTED DEATH CASES BEFORE 1951 CONTINUED PAGE 3									
CH #	NAME	ORGANIZATION	ARTICLES		DATE OF TRIAL	MANNER OF EXECUTION	REMARKS		
350951	Bell	E.T.O.	92	20	11/11/43	Hanged	31 JAN 44		
345773	Bryer, Walter	P.W.	89-92	36	1/25/44	Hanged	1944		
248773	Seidel, Bernhard	P.W.	89-92	36	1/25/44	Hanged	1944		

Official records can be confusing. Above: This is the 'hanging register' which I used to back up my research on the American Servicemen executed in the UK in issue 59. Private Bell is clearly recorded as 'hanged' in January 1944. Below left: The Board of

Review also stated 'Sentence ordered executed' but the letter (below right), discovered by Tilly Black, indicates that Bell was still in prison in 1950! Lesson to be learned: as my maths master used to say — Check, recheck and check again!

CONFIDENTIAL

(382)

1st Ind.

WD, Branch Office TJAG., with ETOUSA. 18 DEC 1943

TO: Commanding General, ETOUSA, APO 887, U. S. Army.

1. In the case of Private THOMAS (NMI) BELL (34327756), Company C, 390th Engineer Regiment (GS), attention is invited to the foregoing holding of the Board of Review that the record of trial is legally sufficient to support the findings and the sentence, which holding is hereby approved.

2. When copies of the published order are forwarded to this office they should be accompanied by the foregoing holding and this indorsement. The file number of the record in this office is ETO 1069. For convenience of reference please place that number in brackets at the end of the order: (ETO 1069).

3. Should the sentence as imposed by the court be carried into execution it is requested that a full copy of the proceedings be furnished this office in order that its files may be complete.



E. C. McNEIL,
Brigadier General, United States Army,
Assistant Judge Advocate General.

(Sentence ordered executed. GCMO 28, ETO, 22 Dec 1943)

AGPK-CR 201 Bell, Thomas

(7 Jul 50)

13 July 1950

The Parole Executive
U. S. Board of Parole
Department of Justice
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Sir:

As a result of an annual consideration of the case of General Prisoner Thomas Bell, 34 327 756, Register No. 63874-A, on parole from the United States Penitentiary, Atlanta, Georgia, clemency has been disapproved.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD F. WITSELL
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

ANNUAL DATE: 2 July

Further to the article which appeared in issue 59 on Shepton Mallet, I commented in issue 66 (page 41) on the subsequent request by Louis Martinez to the US Army to reverse the murder conviction on his uncle, Private Alex Miranda, to that of manslaughter. Now it appears that I may have been at fault in including Private Thomas Bell in the list of those US Servicemen executed in Britain during the war. I had a copy of the so-called 'executed list' when researching the article and, as shown in this facsimile reproduction, Bell is clearly recorded as being 'hanged'. However, Tilly Black wrote to me in October 1991 from London, NW, enclosing a copy of a letter she had obtained from US archives which also indicated that Bell was behind bars in the US Penitentiary in Atlanta after the war. 'I know this conflicts with your document,' wrote Tilly. 'Maybe there was a muddle somewhere in US Army records.' Some muddle! My apologies to you, Mr Bell ... wherever you are!

Keith Spanner wrote in October 1991 from High Wycombe to say that he had taken a great interest in the Kent Channel Gun sites in issue 29. 'With the help of John Guy, I also found Bishopsbourne Station — site of the railway gun and Churchill's visit 50 years ago. I was amazed to find the station villa in original condition, complete with wartime posters. Sadly the area below the bridge has become a dumping ground and it is difficult to picture the crowds of 1941 eagerly awaiting their leader in 1991! I enclose a couple of photographs that may be of interest; you can just about see the bridge behind the trees.'

Sir Ralph Freeman sent us an interesting letter following publication of issue 73 on clearing the Rhine.

'The whole article, with its excellent collection of photos, was of the greatest interest to me,' wrote Sir Ralph, 'bringing back many memories as you can imagine.'

'The caption for Freeman Bridge on page 24 says that I "had warned in [my] main-

tenance instructions that the bridge was not designed to withstand severe icing, and it was ... destroyed during the severe ... winter of 1947". What it does *not* say is that, knowing that at Düsseldorf they get three to four days warning of ice floes, I drew up detailed instructions for disconnecting the separate floating parts of the bridge and towing these into the safety of a convenient nearby dock, all with the full knowledge and approval of the various German engineers and river navigation experts who would be responsible for the bridge. Although I have no proof, my understanding is that this "drill" was put into practice following an ice warning in early 1946 and the bridge was duly stowed away in safety, all as planned, in little over one day. I don't know why this wasn't done again in '47; perhaps they thought that the ice wasn't severe enough to warrant closure of the bridge, or maybe the local politicians persuaded (or ordered?) them to take a chance.



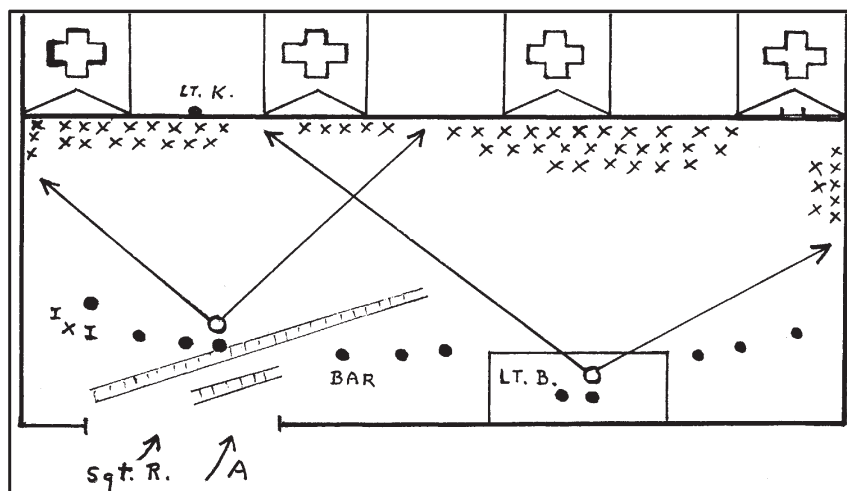
Keith Spanner's pictures of Bishopsbourne Station — compare with those on page 5 of issue 29 taken in 1980.



'I left the Army in November '45 and had no opportunity to return to Düsseldorf until 1977 or '78 — by which time everyone had forgotten Freeman Bridge!

'I wonder if you knew that the bridge was also badly damaged (but soon repaired), sometime in 1946 I think, when two vessels attempted to pass one another in opposite directions through the navigation opening? The Germans had put green and red navigation lights showing up- and down-stream, and apparently some sort of interlock failed, and green lights showed in both directions at the same time!

'Although I left the Army before either of them were finished, I also conceived and designed the Patton Bridge at Köln, mentioned on page 18 and pictured on page 20, and a similar bridge, Montgomery Bridge at Wesel. The piled foundations of these two were designed to be ice-proof, and both had two 65-metre navigation spans and were double-track (in reality, two identical bridges side by side on common piers). For Patton, the navigation spans used German military railway bridging, the approach spans being Bailey. For Wesel, which I think was opened in February '46, i.e. six months or so ahead of Patton, the whole bridge was Bailey — four main spans of 240 feet each, of Standard Widened Bailey Bridge (SWBB), triple-triple construction with chord reinforcement — probably the largest single assembly of Bailey in the world.'



The two faces of war. Above: Colonel Howard A. Buechner's sketch from his book *Dachau The Hour of the Avenger* illustrating the two firing positions during the machine-gunning of the German guards (X), an act which we now know was carried out by Lieutenant Jack Busheyhead (Lt.B). Other witnesses beside the author (A) were Sergeant Ralph Rosa (Sgt.R) and Lieutenant Robert Kinsey (Lt.K). 'I'=Inmates and 'BAR' a Browning Automatic Rifle. Below: Lieutenant Busheyhead (left) with Lieutenant William Rogers and Lieutenant Buechner (right) on a visit to the Berghof on the Obersalzberg just four weeks after the massacre. Below left: Memorial recently erected near Dachau to '43 soldiers of the Waffen-SS who were murdered here on 29.4.1945 after they had laid down their arms'.



In issue 72, I included a picture of the temporary birchwood cross erected by HIAG (the Waffen SS veterans' association) at Webling (near Dachau) to commemorate the deaths of 53 of their men shot by an American patrol on April 29, 1945 (see also issue 27). Now a permanent memorial stone has been erected on the spot and Walter Brück, secretary of the association, says that further memorials are planned for other locations in Bavaria where prisoners were shot, notably Oberpfaffmarn (8 killed); Lippach (36); Eberstetten (17); Utting (6) and Haar (6).

While on this subject, readers may recall our earlier commentary on the killing of the guards at Dachau (see also issue 31). Colonel Howard A. Buechner, Battalion Surgeon with the 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, was a witness to the killings and he describes in detail the events of April 29 in his book *Dachau The Hour of the Avenger*, published by Thunderbird Press, Metairie, Louisiana. *After the Battle* is quoted in the book, Colonel Buechner, writing about the photo on page 15 of issue 27, saying that 'this picture must have been taken only a minute or two before [I] arrived on the scene'. By

the time he got there, 'the standing German soldiers had also been shot'. Following subsequent investigation, First Lieutenant Jack Busheyhead, the Executive Officer of the 3rd Battalion (whom Buechner names as 'the Avenger') was one of about eight men (including Buechner) who were told they were to be court-martialled. However, after further discussion at Patton's headquarters, the accusations were dropped.

'The charges against Lieutenant Busheyhead were considered to be more serious,' writes Colonel Buechner in his book. 'He was accused of violating the rules of the Geneva Convention which protect prisoners of war, regardless of the atrocities which they may have committed. He was brought before General Patton in person. After a brief interchange, Patton ordered every officer who had participated in the Dachau investigation to report to his office. He also demanded that they bring every document and photograph which they had collected. He then asked if they had placed every scrap of evidence in his hands. When assured that nothing had been withheld, he dumped all the papers into a metal wastebasket, asked for a cigarette lighter and personally applied

the flame to the documents. The charges against Lieutenant Busheyhead had been dismissed. But, of greater importance, with this act, the written records of the executions at Dachau were stricken forever from the annals of military history. The incident would remain alive only in the minds of men, and here it was buried for more than 40 years. Officially, the hour of the Avenger had never occurred.'

As far as I am aware, *After the Battle* has never been used as evidence in a court of law . . . not that is until an unusual request from the legal department of Dover District Council landed on my desk in June 1992.

Back in July 1980, in preparation for issue 29, I had taken a number of aerial photographs of St Margaret's-at-Cliffe to illustrate the various sites of the cross-Channel guns. One particular shot, reproduced on page 4 of that issue, showed the location of 'Winnie', an area which now, it seemed, was the subject of a planning dispute. I had to provide a sworn statement as to when the photographs were taken and a proof copy from my flying log book to prove that certain buildings now on the site had been erected since 1980 without permission.



One of the chapters in Volume 1 of *The Blitz Then and Now* covered the early warning radar stations in the UK. This prompted several readers to seek out and explore their local sites, and John Kettle sent pictures of the one near him at Canewdon in Essex. John wrote that 'the Canewdon station was completed in April 1937 and consisted of three 250-foot-high wooden masts. Although Canewdon was noted on Luftwaffe maps, it received remarkably little attention, the closest the Germans got to damaging it was a probably wayward V2 which exploded in a nearby field. The installation was guarded by a variety of troops billeted nearby, including Canadians, one of whom shot the local commander's dog at night, thinking it was an intruder!'

'The installation's last mast was demolished in late 1973, the foundations being blown up. However, some structures still remain, including the control room, guard house, and air raid shelters.'

'I'm told that prior to their demolition,' wrote John, 'the masts' last job was to "jam" the pirate station Radio North Sea! However, a more fitting end for one of the masts is at the Marconi experimental station at Great Baddow, Essex, where it is being used presumably for development work and still looks quite impressive.'

Walter Mackinnon wrote from Symington by Biggar in Lanarkshire in May 1991 to correct me on a couple of points in issue 72. 'On page 23, bottom right, the caption reads "the boiler from the *Aorangi*". This is, in fact, a Class A Admiralty buoy. Two can be seen on page 26 of issue 37. They are divided into four compartments inside. Also, the "what-d'you-call-it" on page 15 of issue 50 is a Cuthbertson Water Buffalo, first built in the 1950s and still in use today, and I enclose a leaflet on it.'



Top: The remains of the Canewdon Chain Home RDF station pictured by John Kettle who also sent a picture of one of the wartime masts re-erected at Great Baddow (above).

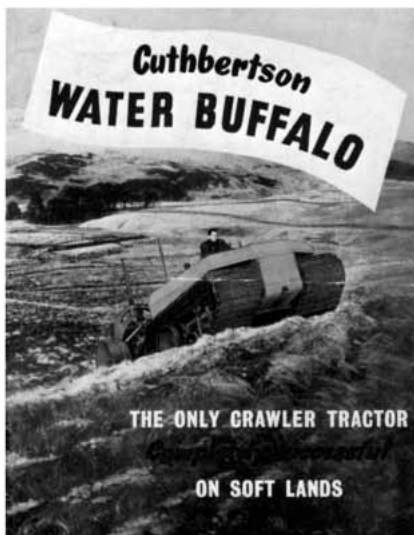
'Regarding the article on the Aalborg attack in issue 72,' wrote Torben Jespersen of Hvidovre, Denmark, 'I noticed a small mistake. On page 10 it is stated that the four airmen shot down on April 26, 1940, from Whitley N1383 buried at Vadum were the first British airmen buried in Danish soil in the Second World War. This is incorrect. On September 30, 1939, a Hudson from No. 224

Squadron was shot down in the North Sea. The pilot, Richard Samuel Pitts, was found on November 17 on the beach between Klitmøller and Hanstholm in northern Jutland, and was buried two days later in Klitmøller. The rest of the crew, three men, have no known grave.'

Another correction came from Fritz Hahn of Oberkochen, Germany. Writing in September 1991, he pointed out that the picture on page 49 of issue 72 'shows an American-made V1. They had a different fairing to the front engine support.'

Major R. E. Ward, ex-Royal Engineers, wrote in September 1991 asking me to correct his name and rank (he was then a captain) given on page 18 of issue 16. He also pointed out that 'there is a small error in the map on page 16 as regards the Tilbury raft sites which were straight across the river in the same bay between the groynes.'

'After the Battle No. 72 was of special interest to me,' wrote Glyn Warren of Bewdley, Worcestershire, in May 1991, 'having visited the Orkney Islands and Scapa Flow only last June along with my good friend Herbert Gangl (the Austrian pilot of the Ju 88 shot down over Malvern Wells) along with his wife and mine. There is so much of military interest on the islands that we were quite fascinated. A visit to the Italian chapel is indeed a must for any visitor, the work carried out by the prisoners has to be seen to be believed. The figure of St George was built up from a framework of barbed wire covered with cement. The unlovely corrugated iron of the hut was hidden by plaster-board, smooth above, panelled below. The altar, altar rail and holy water stoup, all beautifully designed, were moulded in concrete. Behind the altar, reaching up to the sanctuary roof, and buttressed by two windows of painted glass,



From Torben Jespersen: the grave of Sergeant Richard Pitts at Vadum, Denmark.

representing St Francis of Assisi and St Catherine of Siena, was lovingly depicted the Madonna and Child, Chiocchetti's masterpiece, based on a holy picture he had carried with him all through the war. Wood was obtained from a wrecked ship for the tabernacle. This, along with the cathedral at Kirkwall, is well worth a visit.

'I have enclosed a photo for you of yours truly taken in front of the ship's bell in the cathedral. It looks all that much more splendid seeing it in full colour. There are so many aviation crash sites on the islands, and the sunken shipping is enormous from both world wars. There are no less than 86 wrecks in the area covered by Admiralty Chart No. 35 (essentially Scapa Flow). Most people know about HMS *Royal Oak*, but are unaware that HMS *Vanguard*, 19,560 tons, had a magazine explode on the 9th July 1917 one mile NNE of Flotta Terminal and sank with a loss of life that was immense. She went down almost immediately with the loss of over 800 officers and men. An official inquiry found that the accident was caused by the detonation of unstable cordite in one of her magazines.'



This fascinating trio of comparisons was supplied by Douglas Wennberg of Henley on Thames in September 1991, showing himself on exactly the same spot in Paris in 1940, 1952 and today.

Douglas had been born in Sweden but his English mother and father (who was half Swedish, half French) moved to St Jacut de la Mare near St Malo in 1936 when he was aged 3½. On the outbreak of war his French grandmother was suffering from a broken leg and could not be moved, so the whole family stayed put. When the Germans finally appeared at St Jacut, Douglas's father destroyed their French passports and, using their Swedish ones, applied to leave the country but only succeeded in obtaining permission to travel as far as Paris.

They sold up and travelled in one blue Renault taxi to Paris where they spent two weeks while Mr Wennberg attempted to get permission to continue their journey to Sweden. At that time, the German forces were all-conquering heroes and there was no restriction on photography so the young Douglas was pictured by his mother on the Place de la Concorde at the beginning of July with German lorry-borne infantry in the background.

Having finally obtained permission to continue their journey as far as Brussels, they were the only civilians as they boarded a German military train at the Gare du Nord. Douglas had been strictly admonished by his mother not to utter a word of English and,

when a German soldier sat him on his knee, she was terrified that her young son would spill the beans.

After spending seven weeks in the Belgian capital (where Douglas remembers the anti-German feeling being far more evident than in Paris), they finally received authority to travel across Germany by coach to the ferry at Sassnitz. Douglas recalls that they were only allowed to leave because the Germans wanted to get rid of a party of Swedish sailors who had been causing trouble in Antwerp

where their ship had been caught up in the conflict. The Germans must have decided to let all the Swedes depart in one large party.

They reached Berlin one night after it had been bombed (which must date their arrival to August 26 or 29, right after the RAF reprisal raids for the bombing of London see *The Blitz Then and Now Volume 1*).

The Wennberg family had to remain in Sweden until 1945 and they finally reached the UK in September on the first ship to leave Goteborg for Liverpool.





Left: Mr J. Paterson (kneeling right front) in early 1948 outside Block 144 at Changi Camp. Right: 'Not so tatty today' — Block



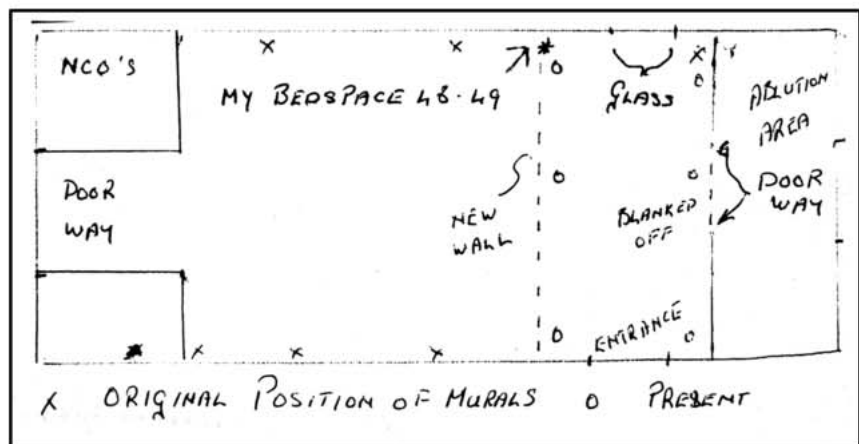
144 in February 1992. Below: His sketch illustrates the mystery of the moving murals in Changi Prison.

Mr J. Paterson wrote to us back in 1982 about the murals on the walls of Changi Prison in Singapore (see page 19 of issue 35). However, it was not until February 1992 that he finally achieved his life's ambition to revisit Singapore.

'It was quite an experience to revisit places that I once knew well,' wrote Mr Paterson in August 1992. 'A visit to view the Changi murals was included, but for me this was the biggest let-down, as the paintings which can be seen today are definitely not the *originals*. The enclosed rough sketch gives a general idea of the first and present layouts. Instead of being the full length of the ground floor they are now in a small room which is described as St Luke's Chapel. Careful searching revealed a small sign which suggested that the former artist had faithfully represented the originals including the restored one. Why this has been done is beyond my understanding. It is rather akin to saying that D-Day took place, say, elsewhere other than Normandy. As to the present location, to suggest that it was used as a chapel in WW2 is really absurd.

'Of course, it could be suggested that my memory is somewhat faulty, only I spent nearly a year there, and I am in touch with former colleagues who remember them too and who are more than a little surprised at what has happened.

'Unfortunately, no outside photography was permitted of the prison. The old camp though was just as it was and I remember it well. Most of the internal roads were named



after UK RAF stations although someone had replaced the original Abbotsinch Road sign with one saying Abbotsingh Road! Otherwise all the others were the same.

'I took in a visit to Changi village, now very modern, and actually found shopkeepers who were there in 1948-49 and still trading under the same names. I had with me a signed and dated menu from the Changi Milk Bar from my last visit in 1949 by the then-proprietor. While it has gone, his son and grandson run a similar establishment and recognised the signature. The menu was duly copied for posterity.'

Sadly, many locations depicted in earlier issues have succumbed to the 'march of progress' and we are grateful for readers' letters informing us of the changes. Jean-Claude Mathevet, writing from Lyon, sent these photographs of the demolition of the 'Jaguar' bunker at Lorient in 1991. Compare with photo on page 24 of issue 55.

Emlyn Jones of Treorchy, Mid Glamorgan, found that the former German bunker near the Nollegap at Vlissingen, featured on page 11 of issue 36, 'now has a wind organ installed on its roof and has not escaped an enterprising graffiti artist.'



Demolition of the Jaguar bunker at Lorient pictured by Jean-Claude Mathevet.



And 'Rooms available' at another German bunker spotted by Emlyn Jones.

I was also sorry to see from a photograph sent to me in July 1992 by Mr L. Eaton, the Chairman of the Norfolk and Norwich Branch of the Dunkirk Veterans' Association, that much of the wall of the barn at the Creton farm at Le Paradis has now been hidden by an outbuilding. The people of Le Paradis and Lestrem erected a new memorial in the farmyard on the 50th anniversary in May 1992, although the original plaque (see issue 15) commemorating those killed on the spot still remains sandwiched between the outbuilding and oil tank in the background of the photograph.

More recently, in January 1993, Jan Heitmann sent photographs showing the demolition of the air defence bunker of 3. Flak-division on Rothenbaumchaussee in Hamburg which he photographed for issue 70 (page 5). Jan says that 'the bunker is next to the Hamburg tennis court where the German Open tennis matches take place every year. The Hamburg government and the owners of the tennis court have wanted to extend the court for many years but it was much too expensive to clear the bunker from the plot. This is in an area where the prices for building lots are outrageous and the city has been looking for a prospective buyer for a long time. Last year [1992], a company bought the site and began to tear down the bunker in order to build a media centre. Work started in early summer (although I took my photos approximately three months later) and work is still in progress. It seems as if they are now half-way. They have to use explosive charges to loosen the material and then remove it piece by piece. The work has to be done very carefully to prevent the surrounding buildings from suffering from the explosions.'

To set against that which has been lost, Trevor Manning of Grays in Essex kindly sent details of two painted signs he had spotted on a trip to Liverpool. 'We were taking a short cut from part of Chinatown (Berry Street) which is directly opposite the Anglican Cathedral. On walking up Mount Street, my attention was drawn to the corner of the road which joins Pilgrim Street. Here is a wall which is the corner of an annexe of, I believe, the Liverpool Institute/Polytechnic (formerly the High School for Boys). On this corner was a large black-painted rectangle with two different types of writing — one, originally in yellow, which reads "EWS 50 YDS" (followed by an arrow pointing down Pilgrim Street); and the other, overlying this and originally painted in white, which reads "FIRE STATION". Close up, these words are at first glance hard to read. But from a distance they are far clearer.

'Intrigued by the instructions painted on the large rectangle, my wife and I walked in the direction of the arrow (down Pilgrim Street). There, just before we reached the end, were the letters "EWS" painted on the wall in yellow outlined in black. Next to this, behind some tall iron railings, is a fairly large concrete area — possibly originally a playground, a legacy of when the building was used as a school.

'I assume that the Emergency Water Supply reservoir in Pilgrim Street was positioned there specifically to help deal with any fires started by bombs dropped on, or near, the Anglican Cathedral — which lies directly opposite its location, approximately 100–200 yards further on.'

And we can add Terry O'Brien's successful retrieval in June 1992 of a second barrel from the bottom of the cliffs at Les Landes in Jersey. This time he selected a 15cm SK L/45 but, unlike his earlier recovery reported in issue 73, it was virtually impossible to get Terry's unique 100kg pulling cylinder down to this particular barrel. As Terry explains: 'It was surrounded by the sea to the west, a 50-foot vertical drop to the north, and 200-foot cliffs to the east and south. To make



Dedication of the new memorial at Le Paradis in May 1992. L–R: Mr H. Lines, Mr F. Madle, Mr E. Leggett and Mr L. Eaton (all Royal Norfolk Regiment veterans), the Mayor of Lestrem, Denis O'Callaghan (son of Bill O'Callaghan, one of the two survivors), and veteran Mr D. Pitcher.



What the RAF failed to achieve in 1943. . . . German contractors working on the demolition of the vital bunker in Rothenbaumchaussee which controlled the wartime air defences of Hamburg.



Fading reminders of wartime Britain photographed by Trevor Manning in Liverpool.



Terry O'Brien does it again. *Left:* The barrel approaching high tide mark. 'The rough sea made the rocks very slippery and prevented access to the barrel', says Terry. 'I got drenched



taking this photo.' *Right:* The 22-foot-long, 6-ton, 15cm L/45 being loaded. Now it can be seen restored and on display at Noirmont Point.



By now, readers will be familiar with the input provided to *After the Battle* by Karel Margry, our ETO Editor, but it was only very recently that I discovered certain aspects to Karel's background that I had previously been unaware of. *Left:* Showing off the



display he had set up when chief historian of the Dutch Resistance Museum in Amsterdam to *left* HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in 1985 and *right*, surprise, surprise, 'Young' Erich of the GDR in 1987!

matters even worse, there is a very large 10-foot deep rock pool with an underwater barrier across it.

'My plan was therefore to pull from the cliff-top, 160 metres away from the barrel, using a pulley wheel suspended in mid-air to get the barrel away from the rock pool, past the high tide mark and up the rocks to a position where the lorries could get at it — a much more ambitious plan than last year's!

'To cut a long story short, nothing seemed to go to plan. First we broke one of the ropes, then a steel cable. and these delays resulted in high tide being in the middle of the day. Finally, the sea turned very rough which prevented us getting anywhere near the barrel to free it when it caught on rocks. After seven days work, during which the lads worked like slaves, the barrel was ready to be pulled up by the lorries.

'A large crowd watched as the barrel was pulled 80 feet up a near vertical cliff. Suddenly it caught on a very solid rock; there was a loud crack as the dummy breech block shattered (4×1¼in), and the cable flew out of the muzzle. A great cry of "Oh, No!" went up as the barrel plunged back on to the rocks. Fortunately, when the dust cleared, we could see that it was not broken. We rushed down, Lou Hulatt pushed the cable back into the muzzle and we secured it with a length of 6-inch RSJ. This time the barrel was not in such a good position, but with much reversing and the aid of a second truck it eventually reached the cliff-top. A German couple told me that it had been the best day of their holiday!



And a lovely tailpiece to end 20 years of *After the Battle*. One of Karel's first major projects for us was to take the comparison photographs for the Danzig story written for us by Wiktor Kurovski in issue 65. During his research in Gdansk in 1989, Wiktor met Stanislaw Gornikiewicz, the curator of the museum on Westerplatte and it was with great joy that we learned that their relationship had blossomed into wedding bells in May 1992. Having had one wife 'phone me to complain that one of my books had come between her and her husband, as he always took it to bed with him, now a marriage made through *After the Battle*. Could this possibly be another first?







**AFTER THE
BATTLE**

WAR FILM

STALINGRAD — THE FILM

Fifty years after the event, the Germans have at last ventured out to make a film about Stalingrad. Non-Germans usually do not realise the depth of the imprint which the defeat of Generalfeldmarschall Friedrich Paulus's 6. Armee in February 1943 made on German society. For the general public

outside Germany, and for most military historians as well, Stalingrad is first and foremost one of the turning points of the war, an event of mainly strategic and psychological importance. But for the Germans it is much more than that. It is a real national trauma and, for many Germans, still a taboo

By Karel Margry

word, nodded at knowingly by those who lived through the war, but preferred not to be talked about in public. The trauma was caused, not so much because Stalingrad was,



In December 1992, your European Editor — on an altogether different assignment in Prague — happened to book into the Praga Hotel on Plzenská Street to find the hotel flooded with bloody-banded and grimy Wehrmacht and Soviet characters and most of the rooms stored with arms, uniforms and other props! It turned out that this hotel was around the corner from the deserted factory block which was being used for shooting

Stalingrad. Above: Although other duties precluded the taking of action stills, Karel did manage to get a few shots of the AFVs parked in the factory yard. Top: The film. The attack on the 'Barrikady' factory by Sturmabteilung 179 — on the left Feldwebel Pflüger (played by Mark Kuhn) with Hauptmann Musk (Karel Hermanek), with artificial right hand, the courageous and respected commander of 2. Kompanie.

for most Germans, the first abode of an inevitable defeat, but even more so because of the sudden and permanent disappearance of over a quarter of a million men: of about 285,000 men surrounded at Stalingrad, some 146,000 died in the pocket; only 91,000 survived the inferno to become prisoners of war and, of these, a mere 6,000 ever returned home, the last as late as 1956. The bereaved families of those that did not return, especially in West Germany and Austria (for the Wehrmacht divisions at Stalingrad included about as many Austrians as Germans), and not forgetting the Rumanians and Italian troops caught with them, never knew whether they were killed in battle, succumbed to wounds, starved from hunger, froze to death or died in captivity. They just disappeared without a trace.

Ever since the war, the trauma of Stalingrad has lingered below the surface of German and Austrian society. The sorrow and pain felt by the surviving veterans and the families of those that were lost has mainly been channelled through the various veteran associations, the 'Traditionsverbände' and 'Kameradschaftsvereine'. These are usually divisional associations but, in the case of Stalingrad, the shared experience of that 'Kesselschlacht' (cauldron battle) and its aftermath was such that there were also formed in the late 1950s a 'Bund der deutschen Stalingrad-Kämpfer' (Association of German Stalingrad Fighters) in Germany and a 'Kameradschaft Stalingrad' (Stalingrad Comrades' Association) in Austria. Like most veteran associations of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, they have always kept a low profile, organising their own commemoration meetings and only seeking the lime-light when advocating better financial and social security for its members. Compared to similar organisations in Britain or the United States, they shied away from too much publicity, certainly vis-à-vis foreign media.

Ever since the war, the Germans have tried to come to terms with Stalingrad. It is a mental struggle in which sorrow and self-pity are besieged by guilt and reason. Because of the misery endured by them, both in the pocket and in the years of captivity, the



The screenplay begins in Italy in the late summer of 1942 in a sea-front Wehrmacht hospital. Unteroffizier Manfred 'Rollo' Rohleder (played by Jochen Nickel) and Obergefreiter Fritz Reiser (Dominique Horwitz), veterans of the fighting in North Africa with Sturmbataillon 336, are visiting wounded comrades and enjoying themselves with Italian girlfriends on the beach. The idyllic scene is interrupted by a battalion roll call at which Major Koch, the CO, announces the news that the battalion is to form the nucleus of a new elite unit of sturmpioniere and introduces Leutnant Hans von Witzland (Thomas Kretschmann), a young and unblooded officer, as the new leader of 1. Zug of 2. Kompanie. Filmed on location in Italy in October 1991, von Witzland's predecessor, Oberleutnant 'Lupo', seriously wounded, can be seen in the wheelchair in the top left corner.

common notion in Germany has been to see the soldiers of Stalingrad as 'victims' and to describe the 6. Armee as 'the sacrificed army' — conveniently forgetting that Germany was the aggressor in the first place and that Russian prisoners of war fared even worse under German captivity.

As part of the coming to terms process, countless books have been written on the battle — by military historians, former generals, and novelists — and many documen-

taries on it have been made. Yet, in all those years, there have been surprisingly few feature films about Stalingrad in Germany. This in stark contrast to the Soviet Union where a score of films heralding the heroism of the Stalingrad defenders has been produced — one of the most recent being Yuri Ozerov's *Stalingrad*, part of that director's multi-film project *Liberation* (see *After the Battle* No. 74.)

One of the very few German films was



Two thousand kilometres further east, travelling in a troop train to the Eastern Front, the new lieutenant discloses to his men that their destination is Stalingrad. The troops are optimistic. Belief in German invincibility is still strong. At the Stalingrad reinforcement railroad, the platoon witnesses Russian prisoners being maltreated by German guards. Hans, the lieutenant, protests but is told to mind his own business by a callous superior, Hauptmann Haller (Dieter Okras). At a field service, held in one of those wadi-like depressions outside Stalingrad, the new men are welcomed by their company commander, Hauptmann Musk. *Left:* Prominent in this still are Unteroffizier 'Rollo' Rohleder and Obergefreiter Fritz Reiser.



Sturmbataillon 336, together with elements of Sturmbataillon 179, attacks the bitterly-contested 'Barrikady' factory. Despite ferocious Russian resistance, they capture the factory, albeit with heavy losses. In the confusion of the fight, Sturmponier 'GeGe' Müller (Sebastian Rudolf) (nicknamed so in order to distinguish him from the many other Müllers in the company) accidentally shoots his pal Dieter. Veterans Fritz and 'Rollo' try to console him. The men prepare the factory for defence. During a pause, they listen to a broadcast of Hitler's speech at the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich of November 8, 1942, in which he claims that Stalingrad 'has been taken'. *Right:* Filmed at the old Poldi steelworks near Kladno, Czechoslovakia.



That night, the lieutenant arranges a cease-fire with their Russian opponents to enable each side to bring in its wounded. The truce is broken by the fanatical Hauptgefreiter Müller ('Hundsgemeine' — the vicious dog), played by Oliver Broumis, who reopens fire without orders. In the ensuing chaos, a Russian boy soldier, Kolja (Pavel Mang) (left), falls into German hands. Still in the factory, the troops receive hot soup and mail. 'Rollo' learns that his wife is having an affair with a French PoW. The demoralising news has hardly sunk in, when the Russians launch a surprise counter-attack. In danger of being cut off, the lieutenant, 'Rollo', Fritz, 'GeGe' and signalman Edgar (Heinz

Emigholz) descend into the sewers of Stalingrad with a flamethrower, hoping to find an escape route. The underground tunnels hide Russian soldiers, but also civilians seeking shelter from the fighting above. Separated in the dark from the other four, Hans bumps into a Russian female soldier, Irina (right), played by Dana Vavrova (in real life married to the director of *Stalingrad* Joseph Vilsmaier). He promises to let her go if she shows him the way out but, before that happens, Irina escapes and Hans is reunited with his comrades. Shortly after, signalman Edgar is gravely wounded in a skirmish and has to have his foot crudely amputated with a knife.

Hunde, wollt ihr ewig leben (Dogs, do you want to live forever), produced in 1959 on a script based on the novel of the same title by Fritz Wöss (Friedrich Weiss) and the book *Stalingrad — bis zur letzter Patrone* by Heinz Schröter. Schröter had been a lieutenant in a Propagandakompanie at Stalingrad and the one commissioned by Goebbels to write the Nazi's official 'heroes commemoration' book for Stalingrad. Although this was never published during the war, Schröter used it as the basis for his post-war book. Not surprisingly, the book, and thus the subsequent film, repeated the theme of the 'sacrificed army' and for that reason was acceptable for a German audience. That the subject was still highly sensitive was shown by another film, *Stalingrad*, produced by the West-German broadcasting company NDR for television in 1963. Much more critical and openly questioning the personal guilt of the generals, it came under heavy criticism from Bundeswehr generals and stirred up a short but sharp public controversy.

For the next 30 years, whether the theme was too delicate, or because the marketing experts predicted that it could never be a box office success, or because the German film industry simply felt unable to recreate a historic battle of such importance and scale, no German film producer would take the risk of a film about Stalingrad.

The first treatment for another film named *Stalingrad* was written in 1982 by scriptwriter Johannes Heide. The rights to it were bought by the Munich-based film company Bavaria Film. Years went by, but nothing came of the project because Bavaria could not find a suitable partner for the project and, eventually, the company relinquished its interest.

It was picked up by Hanno Huth of Senator Film, another Munich film company, who, though aware of the unhealed mental scars over Stalingrad, was convinced that the German public was ready for a Stalingrad film and reckoned that, with the 50th anniversary of the battle coming up, a film on the subject could well prove a national and international success. Huth acquired the rights to the treatment, commis-

sioned a first script to be written, and approached Joseph Vilsmaier to direct the film.

Vilsmaier, after a successful career as cameraman, with 28 films and TV productions to his credit, had turned to directing himself in 1988. His two films so far, *Herbstmilch* (1988) and *Rama Dama* (1990), had been widely acclaimed in Germany and won him several prizes. When first asked by Huth to direct *Stalingrad*, Vilsmaier refused 'because of the taboo surrounding the subject'. However, when, a few months later, first Günther Rohrbach, chief of Bavaria, and then Bob Arnold of ARRI (Arnold & Richter) showed an interest in taking part in the project, Vilsmaier shook off his doubts and accepted the job.

A producing consortium consisting of four partners — Royal Film (Huth), Bavaria Film (Rohrbach), BA (Arnold) and Perathon (Vilsmaier's own film company) — was set up, with Vilsmaier as executive producer and Huth's Senator Film as distributing company. With a budget of DM 20,000,000 (approximately £9 million), it was one of the biggest German film productions of recent years.

To orientate themselves on the subject, Vilsmaier and his co-producers first made a trip to Volgograd, the former Stalingrad. They toured the city and the battlefield, saw the various Russian memorials and visited the Museum-Panorama complex on the banks of the Volga (opened in 1985 to replace the old 'Defence of Stalingrad'



The escape through the sewers. Note the use of captured Soviet sub-machine guns: 'They are reputed to be better than ours,' one of the old hands says to a newcomer in an earlier scene.



Finally out of the tunnels, they manage to get Edgar to a first aid post. The boys are shocked by the misery and the sheer number of the wounded. Fritz forces a medic, whom he mistakenly takes for a doctor, to have a look at Edgar. Hauptmann Haller, who happens to witness the scene, threatens to have the group executed on the spot, but allows the lieutenant to plead his case at divisional headquarters. Director Vilsmaier used real war invalids and men with amputations for the horrific scenes in the first aid post.

museum). At the museum, they were shown letters of German soldiers — last letters which never reached their addressees, poignant testimonies of the suffering and desperation of the men trapped in the pocket. As Vilsmaier said: 'The letters had a strong influence on me. We were in this cellar of the Volgograd museum and suddenly we were shown these letters: December 1942, January 1943, that is shortly before the total collapse. One writer still did not believe that everything would go down; the other was already totally shaken up inside, realising full well that he would never get out. These letters are 50 years old. There were letters of hundreds of ordinary soldiers, bakers, cobblers, right up to officers. If one were to compare these with a hundred letters of today, one would see very quickly that no one can write letters like that any more. People of often simple background were able in part to write almost philosophically. People today instead use the telephone. In any case, for me these letters were decisive, they erased the last doubts: this had to be filmed.'

Stalingrad was originally planned as an 8-hour television series, with a condensed version to be released as a cinema movie on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the battle. However, since such a set-up meant that the television companies would have to wait some two years before they could screen the series and by then probably would have lost interest in it, it was decided to make only the cinema version. As a feature film follows different rules from a multi-part television series, the script had to be revised and Vilsmaier took this opportunity to change certain aspects of the story. Arguing that 'with a historic catastrophe like Stalingrad it is difficult enough to show all the suffering that really occurred and there is no need for added Western-like elements', he took out some of the more Hollywood-style action cinema sequences. 'I was really concerned with reality', Vilsmaier said. 'I wanted to show, as far as this was at all possible, what it was like back then'. Vilsmaier made a thorough study of the historic events and

consulted numerous military experts and participants of the battle from both German and Soviet sides. He then sat down and, together with Jürgen Büscher of Senator Film, rewrote the script.

From the beginning, it was clear to them that two approaches were out of the question: the story should not be told from 'high up' — no massive battle scenes alternating with scenes of generals at headquarters making momentous decisions; and it should not be a history lecture — no superimposed dates or arrows on a map to explain the

development of the historic battle. Instead, they wanted to tell the story through the individual experiences of ordinary soldiers, of the men 'at the sharp end', with the generals appearing only on the side. Their story should be 'true', based on history and facts, but told through fictional characters. The screenplay should concentrate on a small group of men who find themselves thrown together in the giant meat-grinder that was Stalingrad. They share a series of experiences that can be said to be typical for the average soldier at Stalingrad. Each character should be seen as the symbolic representative of thousands of soldiers of the real battle. At the start of the battle they are all still victory-happy, still intoxicated by the success of earlier Blitzkrieg campaigns. As the tragedy unfolds step by step, each person reacts in a different way. However, none of the main characters escapes death. They all die. This was a deliberate choice of the scriptwriters. Vilsmaier: 'I know that when the audience watches a film like that and there is a survivor of the tragedy, the immediate feeling is: "perhaps I could be one of those survivors. And it wasn't that bad after all." So I said: whoever did not fall in battle in this tragedy, died of hunger or cold. There can be no heroes, no happy end.'

The script anchored its starting situation on a true episode of the historic battle. In early November 1942, in order to break the deadlock in the fight for the city, the German High Command despatched four battalions of Sturmpanzer, assault engineers specialised in street-fighting and working with flame-throwers, to Stalingrad, with special assignment to assault and force the capture of the hotly-contested factories in the northern part of the city: the 'Dzerzhinsky' tractor factory, the 'Barrikady' artillery factory, and the 'Red October' steel works. Arriving on November 9, the Sturmpanzer launched a concentrated attack on the 'Barrikady' factory at 3.30 a.m. on November 10. Although they managed to push back the fiercely-defending Russians and gain a foothold in the factory, within 48 hours, their offensive had disintegrated into a series of isolated fights, not much different from the earlier fighting, and the new offensive had lost its impetus.



In the divisional command bunker, Hans overhears General Hentz (a fictitious character played by Martin Benrath) explaining 6. Armee's hopeless situation to his staff. The Russian pincers have closed behind the Germans and Hitler will not allow 6. Armee to break out of the encirclement. Benrath, seen here in the centre, served as a Flakhelfer with an AA unit during WWII.



Hans and his men are not executed but sent to a penal company whose task it is to lift mines from under the snow. The weather is bitterly cold, the Germans lack winter clothing, supplies are growing thin. The troops are hungry and freezing. However, very soon, the men are recalled to the front. The situation is desperate and every man is needed. By now, discipline shows marked signs of disintegration but Hauptmann Musk, the

company commander, manages to rally the men with a promise to rehabilitate them if they help to defend the Marinowka position, retention of which is vital for the envisaged link-up with the relieving Armeegruppe Hoth coming up from the south-west. Otto (Sylvester Groth), also in the penal company and an old friend of Musk, joins the group. Filmed on the polar plains of Kemijärvi, Finland, in March 1992.

Lacking previous experience with war films, Vilsmaier chose his production staff very carefully. Several key men contracted by him for *Stalingrad* had worked together on a previous war film produced by Bavaria, Wolfgang Petersen's internationally-acclaimed U-boat film *Das Boot* (1982), notably the cutter, Hannes Nikel (who got an Oscar nomination for it in 1983); the sound editor, Milan Bor; and the special effects man, Karl Baumgartner. Especially Baumgartner, known affectionately throughout the film world as 'Charlie Boom Boom' is a veteran of many war movies, having previously done the pyrotechnics for such classics as *Die Brücke* (The Bridge, 1959), *The Longest Day* (1962), *Weekend à Zuydcoote* (Dunkirk, 1964), *The Train* (1965), *The Blue Max*

(1966), *Where Eagles Dare* (1969) and *Kelly's Heroes* (1970).

For the remaining crew, Vilsmaier chose people whose abilities he knew well, most of them having worked with him on either one or both of his previous films: music composer Norbert J. Schneider, art directors Wolfgang Hindhammer and Jindrich Goetz, make-up artists Ruth Philipp and Heiner Niehues and costume designer Ute Hofinger.

In all, the complete crew was to consist of 180 people from 12 different countries: Germany, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Finland, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Holland, Belgium, Great Britain and the United States. For better communication, there were eight interpreters on the set.

For his cast, Vilsmaier contracted some 60

actors, most of them relatively young and new to the cinema audience. Before shooting started, the main actors went on a military training course, led by Captain Rick Squeri of the US Army, at the military training grounds at Hohenfels in Germany. The physical exercise and arms training not only heightened the authenticity of the later action scenes, but also prepared them for the rigours of filming on location which, especially when the production was unexpectedly forced to move to within the polar circle, became unusually harsh. For his large set pieces, Vilsmaier mobilised no less than 12,000 extras (mostly Czechs) and, for his action scenes, some 60-100 stuntmen.

The Sturm Handels GmbH company supplied some 9,000 original Wehrmacht uni-



Left: Director Joseph Vilsmaier (with beard) with his main actors. L-R: Thomas Kretschmann, Sebastian Rudolph, Sylves-



ter Groth, Dominique Horwitz and Jochen Nickel, and right as Horwitz, Rudolph, Kretschmann and Nickel appear in the film.

forms, complete with webbing, boots, fatigue-caps, helmets, etcetera. Small arms, guns and grenades, all of World War 2 vintage and in perfect working order, came from the props department of the Barrandov Studios.

As for AFVs, Vilsmaier's main prize were 13 Russian T-34s from Red Army depots in Czechoslovakia, all original 1942 models and in full working order, plus an additional ten Russian tanks, also of 1942 vintage, supplied by the Finnish Army. The tanks were transported to the various locations on low loaders, being driven during the filming by tank crews of the Czechoslovak Army. In addition to the tanks, Vilsmaier had half a dozen OT-810s, the Czech-built replica of the German SdKfz 251 half-track. From the Swiss company Ju Air came a piece of hardware vital to recreate the airlift out of encircled Stalingrad: one of the few surviving German Ju 52 transport planes. (Ju Air, based at Zürich, owns three Ju 52s, all with original 1939 engines, which they use for pleasure flights, flying 17,000 passengers annually.)

Wishing to ensure as much authenticity as possible, Vilsmaier secured the help of a team of technical and historical advisers: for the German side they were Generalmajor a.D. Jochen Löser, former Panzeroffizier Hans-Erdmann Schönbeck (retired president of the German Federal Automobile Industry Association but, 50 years ago, a young lieutenant at Stalingrad), and Hans Schwarzbrown (a former Sturmpannier and another veteran of Stalingrad); Professor Dr Daniel Projektor, retired colonel and long-time teacher at the Moscow Military Academy, was the Soviet adviser.

The next step was to find suitable locations. Although historical authenticity was one of Vilsmaier's top priorities, it was realised from the start that *Stalingrad* could not be filmed in the actual place where it had happened. Apart from the organisational and logistic difficulties of filming in the



The use of severely disabled actors to re-create gruesome shots in the hospital and the attack on the factory sets the film apart from the Hollywood version of war. This short clip, where an unidentified German infantryman gets shot in half by a Russian tank shell at the battle of Marinowka is one which would cause British and American censors much concern. However, it was only after we queried the name of the actor concerned with Senator Films that we realised it had been staged by digging in his legs, for this is none other than Oliver Broumis who plays the 'hundsgemeine' Müller.

former Soviet Union, present-day Volgograd has grown and changed out of all recognition to what it looked like 50 years ago, and Vilsmaier had to look for substitute locations elsewhere. After a long search, these were found in Czechoslovakia. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, eastern European countries have again become open to western film productions. Czechoslovakia had already enjoyed a short popularity with western film makers during the 'Prague Spring' of 1968,

having for example provided the producers of *The Bridge at Remagen* with some very authentic-looking locations (see *After the Battle* No. 16), and after the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 has again opened its doors widely to American and European film makers. To facilitate work in Czechoslovakia, Vilsmaier secured the co-operation of the film producing company Studio Sirotek, of the Ateliery Hostivar, and of the famed film studios of Barrandov outside Prague.



On the icy, snow-covered plain of Marinowka, the men take cover in shallow trenches. The ground is too hard-frozen to dig deeper. They are inadequately armed and ammunition is scarce. Russian T-34s attack the position and threaten to overrun the thin line of infantrymen. In a pitched battle, the Germans sustain heavy losses but manage to knock out several

tanks and fend off the armoured attack. Hauptmann Musk is wounded in action. This battle sequence was filmed partly in Finland and also at Kurivody-Hradcany in Czechoslovakia. The film company claims that their 13 Soviet T-34s dated from 1942, the armoured force being given more body by adding tanks supplied by the Finnish Army.



Back in the relative shelter of ruined Stalingrad, the men are ordered to take part in the execution of Russian PoWs. The pretext for the execution is 'sabotage' but the real reason is to save food for the besieged army. Among the prisoners lined up is young Kolja, the boy captured in the factory. Hans pleads to spare the boy's life but reels back at Hauptmann Haller's threatening question: 'Are you, a German officer, going to disobey an order?' Neither the lieutenant, nor any of his men, dares to refuse to pull the trigger. When one of Vilsmaier's German veteran advisers objected to the inclusion of this scene in the script, saying 'Things like that never happened,' the director checked with the Munich Institut für Zeitgeschichte. It transpired that in the last two months of the battle, there were no less than 348 public executions carried out by the 6. Armee. He left the sequence in — filmed at the factory location in Prague.

Filming for *Stalingrad* started on October 22, 1991, in Italy, where the opening sequences of the military recovery hospital and the troop train leaving for Stalingrad were filmed. In November, the crew moved to

Czechoslovakia for three months of filming in and around Prague. The producers had acquired the use of the closed-down Poldi steel works near Kladno and of an old factory compound on the corner of Dusková

and Plzenská Street in Prague-Smichov and these two locations were used for the scenes which were later combined into the episode of the German assault on and entrenchment in the 'Barrikady' factory. The assault sequence alone, only 8 minutes long in the final film, took three weeks to shoot, or, as actor Dominique Horwitz put it, 'three solid weeks of non-stop lying in muck'. At Smichov, much of the filming was done at night, both cast and crew enduring many uncomfortable hours in the freezing cold.

In January, the film team moved to Kurivody-Hradčany in Bohemia, formerly the largest Soviet training grounds in Czechoslovakia, but now vacated by the Red Army. Using the military airfield to stand in for the historic Pitomnik aerodrome, one of the four German-held airfields in the pocket, Vilsmaier here filmed the vivid scenes of the German wounded and specialist troops waiting to be flown out of the encirclement and of the panic and chaos as the exhausted troops make a desperate run on the last Ju 52 taking off in swirling snow. Also at Kurivody, the art directors built a complete copy of one of those typical Russian steppe villages. Copied from pictures taken of actual villages in the Stalingrad area, it is seen in the film, almost in passing, being burned down by German troops.

Halfway through the shooting, an unwelcome accident completely bowled over the filming schedule. Driving his car on an ice-frozen road, director Vilsmaier slipped and overturned his vehicle, ending up in hospital with a broken hip bone. However, within six weeks he was back on the set, his body still in a corset and with a Munich specialist to look after him. (Vilsmaier promptly used him as a surgeon in the first aid post sequence.)

Nevertheless, despite the director's stamina, the delay caused by the accident threatened to have serious consequences. By the end of February, the snow in Czechoslovakia had almost melted away, but several of the snow scenes still remained to be shot. On short notice, a decision was therefore taken to move the whole production to Finland.



Back in their log dugout, the last shreds of morale have gone. Fritz is fed up with the war and wants to desert. Hans no longer feels himself bound by his oath to the Führer. Young 'GeGe' joins them. They are going to try to escape from the 'Kessel'. Only 'Rollo' stays behind, with Otto and the wounded Musk. In a snow-covered valley, the three weary deserters come across

Russian civilians, sheltering in holes in the ground, starving and cold. In exchange for some bread, they point the way to the aerodrome. Further along, the three find heaps of frozen bodies of German casualties, left to die in the snow and with hospital tags still on them. They take the tags, hoping to smuggle themselves into one of the transport planes.

The transfer of the entire cast and crew with all its equipment and props to the Arctic circle, accomplished in a mere ten days, was in itself a logistical operation of some magnitude. The special problem of bringing the T-34s to the new location was solved by using a Red Army Antonov, the world's biggest transport plane, hired from Kiev, complete with its crew of 20 Russians, at the bargain price of DM 120,000 (£50,000). Four of the tanks were loaded into the plane at Prague airport, flown to Rovaniemi in Lapland and from there transported overland to Kemijärvi in the Arctic.

As far as is known, the tank battle filmed at Kurivody-Hradcany and Kemijärvi in sub-zero temperatures is the largest ever shot for a German movie production. Although a relatively short episode in the film, it is certainly one of the more realistic ever recreated on celluloid. It is one of the few which depicts the gruesome, but all too common technique of eliminating dug-in enemy infantry by having the tank dig its tracks into and on top of a one-man foxhole, burying and crushing the hopelessly-trapped soldier underneath. The audience is spared nothing: one German, running to attack a tank, is hit in mid-body by a tank shell at point-blank range and is seen screaming his dying breath with the lower half of his body lying beside him in the blood-coloured snow.

Shooting was completed on April 2, 1992. In all, some three tons of explosives and around 100,000 rounds of ammunition been expended. No less than 87 people had been injured during the shooting period. Two persons sustained serious injuries: a stuntman and director Vilsmaier himself. In five months, the four cameras had exposed a total of 600,000 metres of film.

There followed nine months of editing, Vilsmaier and chief cutter Hannes Nikel and ten collaborators reducing the material to a film with a duration of 150 minutes. With *Stalingrad*, sound chief Milan Bor also introduced a technical innovation, it being the first European film production to mix its sound on the new digital (six-channel) Dolby Stereo SR*D system.

Before its release, the director and producers of *Stalingrad* were at great pains to explain that their film should be seen as an anti-war statement. With Hollywood films, such statements, if made at all, often serve only to try to assuage public disquiet over gratuitous violence on the screen, but such assurances from German film makers should be accepted more as genuine efforts to come to terms with the past and a real concern over present-day political developments. When asked why *Stalingrad* should be made now, Vilsmaier said: 'The experiences of Stalingrad have a disconcerting actuality. To name but a few examples: xenophobia coupled with German superiority; the rise of right-wing extremism, interested in falsifying German history; the growing tendency to solve problems in a militaristic way — see Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, etcetera, etcetera.'

Announced as 'the main film event of early 1993', *Stalingrad* had its world premiere at the Mathäser Filmpalast cinema in Munich on January 19, 1993. Even before the premiere, it was awarded the Bavarian Film Prize for best overall film production, with Vilsmaier receiving the prize for best conception and best camera, and sound chief Nikkel the award for best sound editing. Following a well-conducted publicity campaign, the film was released with 200 copies in cinemas throughout Germany. Over half a million Germans went to see the film in its first two weeks of showing.

As could be expected, reception of the film was decidedly mixed. Critics' reviews varied from mildly positive to outright negative. Gebhard Hölzl of *Treffpunkt Kino* described it as 'a courageous, honest film',



For his film, Vilsmaier built a typical Russian hamlet, copied from pictures taken in the Stalingrad area, on the former Soviet training grounds at Kurivody-Hradcany. The airfield scene of the evacuation of the wounded was also recreated here. Note the five Czech OT-810 half-tracks.

acceptable both from the artistic and ethical point of view. He judged Vilsmaier's direction of the film 'saddlefast', with special praise for the careful staging of the battle scenes and the accuracy of the art direction. Urs Jenny of *Der Spiegel* concluded that

Vilsmaier had made 'gun-cracking war cinema, but with a bad conscience, never full out, never triumphant, always black-edged'. Though praising Vilsmaier's 'secure grip' on his actors and the whole project, Jenny criticised the screenplay, crying down the



At the Pitomnik airfield, long lines of wounded and specialist troops wait to be flown out. Many soldiers have self-inflicted wounds and these are taken out of the line, dumped in the snow and shot. The examining doctor is fooled by the casualty tags of the three deserters. However, with one of the last Ju 52s preparing to leave, chaos breaks out as the desperate troops, oblivious of Feldgendarmarie firing into the crowd, storm the plane. None of the three manages to fight his way aboard and they have no choice but to return to their log bunker. The men have lost all hope. Their will to fight has gone. Waving his pistol, Hauptmann Haller tries to restore discipline. He shoots young 'GeGe', but is himself shot by Otto. Shooting their own superior officer is the group's only moment of triumph.



characters as too stereotypical and the end as too melodramatic. He thought the narration 'as heavy-going as the terrain . . . passing the usual stations of well-worn and typical dog-face misery, never finding a unique, surprising, sweeping moment, an image that shows the monstrosity of it all'. He also found the film's deliberate lack of an image of the enemy, its avoidance to label the enemy as 'bad guys', unrealistic: 'not an evil word against the Russians leaves the lips of the main characters, not one evil Russian appears on the screen'.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the scene that evoked most discussion, both in the press and among viewers, was the one of the Russian prisoners being shot. Some people objected to it because it appears to spoil the image of the ordinary soldier as the main 'victim' of Stalingrad, and to again brand the Germans as a nation of war criminals. Others thought just the reverse, opining that it made the Germans look too good, since it shows the soldiers in the all too uncommon role of protesting against an obviously criminal order (although their protest seems not so much against the execution as such as prompted by the fact that their Russian 'friend' Kolja is among the people lined up). Almost every viewer in Germany linked the film's clear anti-war statement to the current discussion about the desirability of possible future commitment of Bundeswehr forces in United Nations context.

In the final analysis, Vilsmaier's idea to portray the mass suffering of the historic battle of 50 years ago and convey the senselessness and stupidity of war in general, through the experiences of a small group of men, does not seem to work out. Although well-played, the characters do not really come alive. For some reason, the process of identification, necessary for a film to get a grip on its audience, does not take place. As the drama unfolds, one remains an uninvolved bystander.

At the same time, Vilsmaier seems to have overlooked the fact that if one wants to tell the disintegration and destruction of a whole army through the experiences of one small platoon, one has at least to give plausible and sustained indications that this platoon is representative for thousands of others, all of them caught up in the same drama. The film has some notable mass scenes, but these are offset by several other scenes where the group is seen all by itself in a vast wasteland of snow with no other troops in sight (a notable example is the scene after the tank battle, when the group, reduced to half a dozen men, is seen man-handling an anti-tank gun across a wind-swept snowy plain). In short, despite the director's good intentions, the film somehow fails to do justice to the sheer magnitude of the tragedy of 50 years ago.

Seeking shelter in Haller's command post warehouse, they find it stocked to the full with supplies, clothing, food and wine. In a side room, they discover a Russian female prisoner, tied to a bed. It is Irina, the woman met by Hans in the sewers. The others retreat from the room ('It is done in order of rank', says one of them), but Hans cannot bring himself to rape her. Irina speaks good German (she is an army interpreter) and they talk. In the other room, the atmosphere is unreal, almost dreamlike. While the battle rages outside, the men drink and play cards. They know they are doomed and each reacts to it in his own way. Hauptmann Musk, in his dying fever, gives incoherent orders for a final effort. His friend Otto, with a disillusioned, final 'Heil Hitler', kills himself with a bullet through the mouth.

In many ways, *Stalingrad* resembles the last major World War 2 feature film released before it, the 1990 Warner production *Memphis Belle* (see *After the Battle* No. 69): a fictional story against the background of a true event; the excitement and horror of war encapsulated in the experiences of a small group of young men; the deliberate non-use of established box office stars; the attempt at authenticity and the attention for technical details and historical accuracy. Looked at it

thus, *Stalingrad* can be seen as the German compendium to that American movie, the two perhaps setting the trend for future films with a Second World War theme.

So far, *Stalingrad* has been sold to most European countries and to Japan, but not as yet to Britain or the United States. Negotiations for its distribution are currently under way as we go to press, and it is anticipated that a subtitled cinema version should appear later in 1993.



'Rollo' drags the dying Musk out of the building, only to witness General Hentz and his staff surrendering to the Russians. The 6. Armee has capitulated. With dead eyes, reduced to a fighting hulk, 'Rollo' refuses to take in that he is a prisoner. He prepares to seek the main battle line. In the house, Hans and Fritz prepare to give themselves up. Irina offers to guide them to the Russian lines but, as they wander across the snowy plain outside Stalingrad, the Russians open fire on them. Irina is killed and Hans wounded. All alone and completely lost, Fritz drags his wounded lieutenant across the windswept snow desert. Overcome by exhaustion, they sit down and slowly freeze to death. The icy wind covers the bodies with snow until they are no more than a white mound in a white landscape. The silence of death hangs over Stalingrad.



TYPHOON CRASH AT BOULON, NORMANDY

By Denis Sweeting

On June 18, D+12 in the invasion of Normandy, six rocket-firing Typhoons of No. 198 Squadron took off from Funtington Airfield, north-west of Chichester, at 1805 hours. They were on a regular armed reconnaissance, searching for German armour or transport on the roads in Normandy. The aircraft all carried eight rockets on rails under the wings; each rocket had a 60lb semi armour-piercing explosive warhead. In addition, the Typhoons were equipped with four 20mm cannon.

The formation was led by a Belgian, Flight Lieutenant 'Cheval' Lallement, DFC, and flew in two sections: Blue Section comprised (1) Flight Lieutenant Lallement (Belgian) in MN293, (2) Flight Sergeant Stratford in MN425 and (3) Pilot Officer Mason (Austrian) in MN132. Green Section consisted of (1) Squadron Leader Ezanno (French) in MN557, (2) Flying Officer Milich (New Zealand) in MN253, (3) Flying Officer Armstrong in MN344.

The target area given to them was the roads south of Caen, which were heavily defended by German anti-aircraft guns. They reached the area at 1850 hours, flying at 8,000 feet and, after some searching, transport was sighted on a road south-west of Caen near Louvigny.

The Typhoons immediately dived on the convoy and were met by intense fire from multi-barrelled Flak guns all around the area. They nevertheless pressed home their attack to a low level, firing their rockets and

cannon. Two vehicles were seen to burst into flames but, as they climbed up, Dick Armstrong's aircraft was seen to be on fire and he crashed in a field. Don Mason was heard on the radio to say that his aircraft was on fire and that he would try to make it to the British lines which were north of Caen. Bill Stratford's aircraft had been hit in the port gun bay and was streaming smoke, and Paul Ezanno and Timmy Milich also both reported that their machines had been hit.

Don Mason's aircraft could not be seen and he did not answer on the radio. As petrol was getting low, the four remaining Typhoons reformed and returned to England, Bill Stratford's aircraft smoking all the way. They landed at Funtington at 1945, the ammunition in Stratford's aircraft still smouldering!

Dick Armstrong's wife had given birth to their first child only the previous day, and he had been celebrating the event in the mess the evening before the flight. He was later reported a prisoner-of-war.

Nothing further was heard of Don Mason or his aircraft, and it was thought that he had tried to get back to England and had gone down in the sea. After the war, his name was inscribed on Panel 258 at the Runnymede Memorial. He was an excellent pilot and the best rocket marksman in the squadron, and only the week before he had succeeded in blowing the whole turret off a German tank.

Bill Stratford was also killed a few weeks later when he was shot down near

Vimoutiers, and Timmy Milich, who was a Maori, was shot down and killed in Holland in December 1944.

In 1992, Jean Pierre Benamou, Director of the Bayeux War Museum, was told by a farmer, Monsieur Lemarois, that a British aircraft had crashed on his farm near the village of Boulon in 1944 and still lay buried there. Dr Benamou got his team together and in November the wreckage of a Typhoon was excavated with the pilot's remains still in the cockpit. He was identified as Don Mason by the uniform and a wallet.

Forty-nine years after his death, he was buried with full military honours by the French Air Force at St-Charles-de-Percy War Cemetery in Normandy. The service on March 10 at 10.30 a.m. was followed by a ceremony at the Typhoon Pilots' Memorial (see *After the Battle* No. 69), erected by the French people at Noyers-Bocage. This commemorates the 150 Typhoon pilots killed during the ten-week Battle of Normandy.

Five ex-198 Squadron pilots attended the funeral with members of Don Mason's family, including a daughter and granddaughter who had travelled from Australia.

Following a wreath-laying ceremony in Bayeux War Cemetery, where 16 Australian airmen are buried including four from 198, in the evening, the Mayor of Bayeux hosted a reception in the Hôtel de Ville.



Left: The two 20mm cannons from the port wing were uncovered barely two feet below the surface. Right: The Mason family visit the crash site in March 1993. L-R: Granddaughter,



Jean Pierre Benamou, daughter, M. Lemarois on whose land the Typhoon crashed, a local eyewitness, brother, daughter, president of local French veterans, and a second brother.



THE DEATH OF ROMMEL

By Karel Margry

On Monday, July 17, 1944, Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel, commander of Heeresgruppe B, was seriously wounded when his car was strafed by Allied fighters of No. 602 Squadron near the village of Saint Germain-de-Montgomery in Normandy (see *After the Battle* No. 8). Wounded in the face and unconscious, Rommel was taken to a pharmacy at Livarot and given first aid treatment by a French doctor, who said the wounds were very severe and that there was little hope of saving his life. Still unconscious, Rommel was then moved to a Luftwaffe hospital at Bernay. The doctors there diagnosed severe injuries to the skull: a fracture at the base, two fractures on the temple and the cheekbone destroyed, a wound in the left eye, wounds from glass and concussion.

Lucie Rommel, the field-marshal's wife, was first notified of the accident at 7.00 a.m. next morning when she received a telephone call at the family home at Herrlingen near Ulm in Swabia in southern Germany from Generalleutnant Hans Speidel, Rommel's Chief-of-Staff. As it happened, Helene Rommel, the field-marshal's sister, was present when the call came. In the weeks that followed, Speidel kept Frau Rommel daily informed about her husband's condition.

When he was put out of action, Erwin Rommel already knew that he was fighting a lost battle. By early July 1944, Rommel had reached the conclusion that the war in the West could no longer be won. In his view, the most sensible thing for Germany now was to seek a separate peace with the western Allies, so that the Wehrmacht could devote its remaining power to the war in the East.

Rommel had always been frank with Adolf Hitler, his supreme commander. Since the invasion had started, he and Feldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt, the Oberbefehlshaber West and his direct superior, had met Hitler in conference twice, at the Führerhauptquartier at Margival (see *After the Battle* No. 19) near Soissons in France on June 17 and at Berchtesgaden on June 29. As a result of the

latter meeting, Hitler had decided to replace the 'defeatist' von Rundstedt with Feldmarschall Hans-Günther von Kluge, who arrived in France on July 3 fully confident that he could carry out Hitler's no-retreat directives. His first encounter with Rommel led to a



Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel (left) with his Chief-of-Staff, Generalleutnant Hans Speidel. Behind is Rommel's aide, Hauptmann Hellmuth Lang. (Top BA)



furious clash, both field-marschals shouting slandering remarks at each other. However, within a week, von Kluge came to realise that the situation in the West was indeed beyond salvage, and he, too, now saw a separate peace as the only realistic option.

On July 3, Rommel dictated a ten-page memorandum on the Normandy battle so far, and on July 15, just two days before he was wounded, he drew up another report, to be sent to Hitler through von Kluge, in which he summed up the military crisis and forecast that the unequal struggle was drawing to its close. Rommel sent off the uncompromising report realising it could well mean his relief, if not worse.

However, the sequence of events that ultimately was to lead to Rommel's death had no direct connection with his handling of the battle in France. Unknown to Rommel, a secret anti-Hitler movement of high-ranking officers and civilians was conspiring to kill the Führer and overthrow the Nazi regime. The conspirators had concluded that they needed Rommel's name to make their deeds palatable to the broad mass of the army after Hitler's assassination and regarded him as the one person respected enough by the western Allies to be acceptable in negotiations over a separate peace.

However, despite repeated overtures, the plotters never succeeded in actually enlisting the field-marshal for their planned coup. Painfully aware that he owed his own lightning career to Hitler, Rommel always adhered religiously to his oath of allegiance to him. Only four months earlier, on March 5, he had co-signed the statement of loyalty to the Führer which Hitler had demanded of his field-marschals (following the 'treason' of the Stalingrad generals who, after their capture, had 'deserted' to the Russians). Although Rommel criticised Hitler for his handling of the military campaign, he never ever questioned his ultimate authority. The idea for a coup d'état, let alone a murder plot, was totally beyond him. To the very end, Rommel always remained Hitler's man.

Twice in 1944, the conspirators had made direct approaches to the field-marshal. In late February, while Rommel was on leave at his home in Herrlingen, he had received a visit from an old acquaintance, Karl Strölin, Lord Mayor of Stuttgart and a member of the conspiracy who, during a five-hour conversation in the presence of Rommel's wife and 15-year-old son Manfred, gave a dramatic speech about the criminality of the Hitler regime and the need for Rommel to step in, in person, to 'save the Reich'. Strölin presented papers documenting massacres of Jews and others in the East and, although he did not utter a word about a plan to kill Hitler, openly stated: 'If Hitler does not die, then we are all lost'. At this, Rommel retorted: 'Herr Strölin, I would be grateful if

In 1944, the Rommel family home was in Herrlingen, a small village just off the Stuttgart to Munich autobahn five miles west of Ulm. Their home lay on Wippinger-Steige, a side road leading uphill to the village of Wippingen. No. 13 had an interesting history. Built by the Kreisser family in 1906, it remained a private home until 1926 when it was taken over as a 'Landschulheim' (country boarding school) by Anna Essinger. When she and her 65 pupils emigrated to Britain in October 1933, after the Nazis had come to power, her successor, Hugo Rosenthal, used it for a Jewish mixed boarding school which he managed to maintain until 1939. That year, the Nazis closed down the school and made it a home for aged Jewish people, but in 1942 the old people were deported to Theresienstadt concentration camp and the villa was confiscated. For a time it stood empty, but by 1944 the state had begun converting the house into a night refuge from the air raids for the mayor of Ulm. However, the Nazis accused the mayor of deserting his city, so through the intervention of Karl Strölin, the influential Lord Mayor of Stuttgart and a friend of the Rommel family, the city of Ulm willingly agreed to rent it to the celebrated field-marshal. Russian prisoners completed excavating a 20-foot deep air raid shelter, while the gardens were landscaped under the direction of Rommel's elderly adjutant, Hauptmann Hermann Aldinger. By February 1944, Frau Rommel had moved the household into the big villa. These pictures were taken for record purposes by a Propagandakompanie photographer on October 21, 1944, the day of Rommel's burial at Herrlingen cemetery. (BA)

you would refrain from speaking such opinions in the presence of my young son!' From all evidence, it is plain that the visit had no influence on Rommel whatsoever. He never mentioned it to anyone outside the family.

The second attempt to enlist Rommel for the plot took place five weeks after D-Day. Unknown to Rommel, many high-ranking officers, both in his own staff and at German military headquarters in Paris, were deeply involved in the conspiracy. Leader of this group was General der Infanterie Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, the military governor of France. Most members of his staff were involved as well, prime among them his adjutant, Oberstleutnant Caesar von Hof-

acker (a cousin of Oberst Klaus von Stauffenberg, the man who was to place the bomb that was to kill Hitler).

However, the key figure among the officer conspirators in France was Rommel's own Chief-of-Staff, Generalleutnant Hans Speidel. He had been an opponent of the regime ever since Stalingrad, and had in fact been especially assigned to Rommel by the anti-Hitler members of the General Staff in order to put feelers out to the field-marshal. Only one day before his arrival, Speidel had discussed with Strölin the need to lure Rommel into the plot. Rommel suspected nothing of all this. He and Speidel were both Swabians and he completely trusted him.



In May 1945, a unit of the US Army requisitioned the Rommel villa for billets and Lucie Rommel vacated the property which held such sorrowful memories for her. In 1950, the house became a children's home for a German labour union until 1974. Closed down, it stood empty for ten years until purchased by the present owner, Herr Dieter Keppler, in 1984. Today, new properties stand close by on the hillside below.



On June 4, 1944, with the prospect of bad weather ruling out the immediate threat of invasion, Rommel motored from Normandy to celebrate his wife's 50th birthday which fell on June 6. Left: This picture was taken on the terrace. L-R: Helene



(Rommel's sister), Hildegard Kirchheim (a friend), Lucie Rommel and 15-year-old son Manfred, on temporary leave from his Flak unit. Right: Herr Keppler very kindly gave us the run of his house to take the comparisons.

Proceeding very cautiously, Speidel enhanced Rommel's natural inclination to pessimism, feeding him with black tidings about the disastrous situation on the Eastern Front. Taking care never to sound too defeatist in Rommel's presence, he thoroughly influenced the other members of Rommel's staff. Meanwhile, behind his superior's back, he had many secret meetings with fellow plotters. On May 12, he had Rommel throw a banquet for General Eduard Wagner, the army quartermaster general, ostensibly to talk about supplies for the Atlantic Wall, the real motive of the meal being for him to see Wagner, who was one of the key plotters. Three days later, he begged Rommel to give presence at the christening of a colonel's daughter near Paris, a pretext to give Speidel a chance to see von Stülpnagel. Plotters came to see him at the Heeresgruppe headquarters at La Roche-Guyon, invariably when Rommel was absent on visits to the front. On May 27, while on leave for Pentecost at his home at Freudenstadt, he conferred with Strölin and Baron Konstantin von Neurath, ex-Foreign Minister and former Protector of Bohemia-Moravia and also in on the plot.

By June 1944, Speidel judged that the time was ripe for a direct approach to Rommel. The man chosen to put the proposal to Rommel was Oberstleutnant von Hofacker, von Stülpnagel's adjutant. Rommel had known his father, Generalleutnant Eberhard von Hofacker, which would be a good introduction. On June 10, four days after the invasion and just at a time when Rommel began showing signs of pessimism, Speidel invited von Hofacker to La Roche-Guyon, ostensibly for a lecture on the strategic situation. However, although he did manage a private interview with Rommel, von Hofacker dared not venture out of his reserve and the meeting ended without the topic having been brought up.

A second attempt was made four weeks later. On July 8, while Rommel was away inspecting the Caen battlefront, Speidel secretly met von Stülpnagel in Paris to arrange a new visit. Next day, July 9, Hofacker came to La Roche-Guyon once more, being ushered into Rommel's room by Speidel who then left the two men alone. No record exists of what was said in the half-hour interview. As far as is known, von Hofacker did the talking, while Rommel merely listened. His mind was fully occupied with the crisis at Caen, which reached its height that day, and it is unlikely that he paid much attention to what was being said. Discussing the war's progress in general terms, the colonel ex-

plained that the situation called for swift action and that, if the Führer refused to act, then he must be coerced. Von Hofacker made no reference to a specific opposition movement and there was no mention of an assassination.

The interview with von Hofacker left Rommel unchanged and unimpressed. Afterwards, he took Speidel for a walk in the château grounds and dismissed any idea of coercing Hitler as quite out of the question. Instead he suggested an idea that he himself had been playing with for some time: to go and see the Führer and ask his permission for a meeting with Field-Marshal Montgomery to discuss an armistice as a prelude to a joint Anglo-German campaign against Russia.

However, von Hofacker returned to Paris convinced, or deluding himself, that he had enlisted the field-marshal for the plot. He told his fellow conspirators in Paris that Rommel had placed himself wholly at their

disposal and was willing to lead the armistice talks with the Western powers. Next day, July 11, he flew to Berlin and repeated the same to von Stauffenberg and Carl Goerdeler, ex-Lord Mayor of Leipzig and civilian head of the plot.

It was a gross misinterpretation of Rommel's stance. By July 1944, Rommel had come to mistrust Hitler's judgement, and to hate and despise the generals and advisors around him at the Führerhauptquartier, but he still admired the Führer. Like the plotters, Rommel was of the opinion that the war had reached a stage where Germany should seek a political solution, but he was thinking in terms of convincing Hitler to seek a separate peace with the West. To him, the thought of a coup d'état against Hitler, let alone an assassination attempt, was unthinkable.

Three days after he had been put out of action, on July 20, the attempt to kill Hitler



By 10.00 p.m. on the evening of D-Day, Rommel was back at his HQ in the château at La Roche-Guyon after a frantic 700-kilometre drive. His rôle as commander of Army Group B was to last exactly six more weeks — until the fateful day of July 17 when his staff car was shot up while returning to the château. After intensive care in hospital in France, Rommel was allowed to return home on convalescent leave on August 8. Here he relaxes with Lucie and Manfred on the terrace.

took place (see *After the Battle* No. 19). Rommel, when he heard about it in hospital, was disgusted and shocked. To von Kluge he exclaimed: 'Madness. Incredible. Against the Führer! Nobody wanted that.' Never once, even to his most intimate friends, did he ever condone what Stauffenberg had attempted. In a letter to his wife, he wrote: 'Coming on top of my accident, the attempt on the Führer's life has given me a terrific shock. We can thank God that things turned out as well as they did.'

On July 23, a specially-modified automobile transported Rommel to a hospital at Le Vesinet, just outside Paris. His left eye was still swollen and he was suffering from severe headaches. He was a restless and undisciplined patient, who refused to recognise how serious his injuries were, and repeatedly climbed out of bed. He wanted to get back to Normandy and resume command; in particular, he wanted to see Hitler.

So far, he had received only one short telegram from the Führer: 'Accept, Herr Feldmarschall, my best wishes for your further speedy recovery'. In addition, the Nazi press until now had made no announcement of his injury. Rommel feared that the silence was deliberate, a sign that the whole blame for the defeat in France was going to be put on him.

When the BBC announced that Rommel had been injured and might even be dead, he seized the opportunity and appeared at a press conference in Paris on August 1, hiding his pain and turning the intact half of his face to the press photographers.

On August 7, Dr Udo Esch, chief doctor of Le Vesinet Hospital, declared Rommel fit enough to travel back to Germany and next day, August 8, Rommel was transported to his home in Herrlingen. Dr Esch and Dr Scheuning, the chief doctor of Heeresgruppe B, personally accompanied the patient to Herrlingen and, on arrival, passed further treatment over to brain specialists Professor Dr Albrecht and Dr Stock of the nearby Tübingen University Clinic.

Rommel's son, Manfred, was then, like many German boys of his age, serving as a Flakhelfer (anti-aircraft gun crew member) at a gun-site on the outskirts of Ulm. That day, he received a telephone call from his battery commander: 'Your father has arrived in Herrlingen and you have been posted to his staff. You will be collected today'. As Manfred later recalled: 'A command car carried me to Herrlingen, drove through the garden gate and stopped in front of the house. The maid opened the door. I threw my rucksack to the floor with a clatter of mess-tins, hurriedly washed my hands and then went into the study. My father, his left eye covered with a black bandage, sat in an armchair beside a low coffee-table. The left half of his face had been crushed by the weight of the blow it had received. He raised himself shakily to his feet and we exchanged greetings. "I'm getting along pretty well so far", he said in reply to my question. "I still get headaches and my left eye is closed and won't move. But it will all get better".'

The doctors begged Rommel to stay in bed, warning it would be at least eight weeks before he could return to duty, but he did not heed their advice. Too restless, each morning he would make his way downstairs and, after breakfast, sit in an armchair in his large ground-floor study, or go for a stroll in the garden. In the weeks that followed, Rommel spent many hours with his wife and especially with his son, talking about the fighting in Normandy, recounting his own experiences there and his dealings with higher headquarters. He did not hide his belief that the war was lost and that Germany should seek peace in the West. He was still kept informed daily of Heeresgruppe B's operations, but few of his officers could come and see him. One day, a courier officer from France brought

Meanwhile, unknown to Rommel, his death warrant was being signed in the aftermath of the abortive attempt to kill Hitler on July 20. However, contrary to what many people still believe today, Rommel was never a real member of the conspiracy. Although convinced by 1944 of the criminality of the Nazi regime, and playing with the idea of seeking an independent armistice with the western Allies, he was never told of the plan to kill his supreme commander, and he would certainly have been against it if he had. Yet, very soon after the failed putsch, Rommel's name was reported to Hitler by the Gestapo as one of those involved in the plot. One of the main culprits was Oberstleutnant Caesar von Hofacker (right), a key conspirator who had been sent to enlist Rommel for the conspiracy on July 9 and who, under Gestapo interrogation, claimed that both the highest commanders in France, Rommel (Army Group B) and von Kluge (OB West), had been in the know.



news that von Kluge had poisoned himself in his car after Hitler had sacked him.

As for the trial of the plotters, Rommel knew little more than what the press reported. On August 29, the People's Court in Berlin condemned to death von Stülpnagel, von Hofacker and the other plotters from Paris. All except von Hofacker were hanged the same day (Hofacker was not executed until December 1944). Rommel was still unaware of the threat building up against himself. To the Rommels, it seemed odd that none of the top Nazi leaders showed any concern for him or inquired how he was getting on. Also, Rommel still wondered why the press releases on his injury, when finally given out by the Propaganda Ministry, only spoke of a 'car accident' and failed to make clear that he had been wounded in action under enemy fire.

Strange things began to happen around the house in Herrlingen. Once, Rommel's elderly manservant, Gefreiter Rudolf Loistl, heard a man scratching at the front door — and when he jumped up to the window he

saw someone flitting into the darkness. The local mayor reported that Frau Wolfel, a neighbour, had seen suspicious characters shadowing Rommel, evidently the Gestapo. After that, Rommel obtained an army sentry from the Ulm garrison, and he never went out without a pistol in his pocket. By that time, Rommel had taken to walking with his son almost daily through the wood near the house, and one morning, sitting with his son in the study, he suddenly said: 'Look here, Manfred, it's possible that there are certain people round here who would like to do away with me quietly and without too much fuss — by an ambush in the wood, for instance. But I don't intend to let it put me off my walk. So, for the time being, we'll take pistols. You can have my 9mm. These individuals don't hit anything with their first shots. If shooting does start, the thing to do is to fire blind towards where it's coming from, and they almost always go for cover or aim badly.' After that, although he did not fully understand the background, Manfred lived with a 'feeling of approaching disaster'.



As more conspirators were arrested and interrogated, among them Rommel's own Chief-of-Staff Speidel (left), evidence against Rommel seemed to build up and by October Hitler had decided that he would have to eliminate his favourite field-marshal, giving him the choice between appearing before the People's Court, which would mean public disgrace and certain condemnation to death, or the more 'honourable' option of committing suicide. The mission of bringing the grim message to Herrlingen was given to Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutant, General der Infanterie Wilhelm Burgdorf (right), since July 20 also the head of the Heeres-Personalamt.



Burgdorf announced his visit for Saturday, October 14, and he arrived with Generalmajor Ernst Maisel, his deputy, who had come along as an official witness. Indicating that they wished to see the field-marshal alone, Rommel took them to his large study on the ground floor, where they proceeded to confront Rommel with the accusations and statements made against him. This picture of Rommel's 'Arbeitszimmer', where the fatal interview took place, was taken a week later by a Wehrmacht photographer who visited the house on the day of Rommel's burial. Note the signed photo of Hitler on the desk and the portrait of the Führer on the wall. (BA)

On another night, the sentry caught a man doing something at the entrance to the cellar and, when the intruder ran away on being challenged, opened fire on him. As the incidents accumulated, the Rommels began to worry. Was the house really being watched by the Gestapo — and, if so, why?

Yet, Rommel may have had his suspicions. To Hans Seitz, Lucie's brother-in-law and his boyhood friend, Rommel confided: 'I hear they've found a briefcase belonging to Goerdeler, and do you know, there was a note in it saying that since I am the only officer whom the enemy respects, I must take power after the revolution. That may cost me my neck.'

On September 3, Rommel was formally retired from the position of army group commander. Three days later, on September 6, Speidel paid a surprise visit to Herrlingen. He shocked Rommel with the news that he, Speidel, had been suddenly dismissed as Chief-of-Staff of Heeresgruppe B (Hitler had sent General der Infanterie Hans Krebs to replace him) and ordered to report to Berlin. No reason whatsoever had been given. Even now, Speidel did not tell Rommel that he himself was involved in the murder plot against Hitler, although he did warn his former superior that he had heard that Feldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the OKW (Armed Forces High Command), and Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, chief of OKW operations staff, had described Rommel as a 'defeatist'. He talked with Rommel for many hours. Rommel was still playing with his idea of a unilateral surrender and, as Speidel was due to report to the Führerhauptquartier a day or two later, they agreed to take the opportunity to try another peace proposal through Generaloberst Heinz Guderian, the Chief of the General Staff.

Next day, September 7, Speidel was arrested at his house in Freudenstadt and taken to Berlin. Rommel was not officially notified of this arrest, but learned about it that same evening when Ruth Speidel telephoned him. Rommel, ignorant even now about Speidel's involvement in the plot, could only assume that scapegoats were being sought among Western Front commanders for the Wehrmacht collapse in France. From this moment on, he always carried

around him a document file with 'defence exhibits', such as his prophetic letters to Hitler of July 3 and 15, which he felt he might need to justify his command decisions in Normandy.

That same afternoon, inhabitants of Herrlingen 'phoned the Rommels to warn them that two suspicious characters were loitering very close to their house and withdrawing into the woods whenever someone approached them. Rommel's long-time secretary, Feldwebel Albert Böttcher, was warned of the same two people by the owner of the 'Zum Kreuz' restaurant, who had seen them park their car nearby. At 3.30 p.m., Hauptmann Hermann Aldinger, Rommel's Ordonnanzoffizier (administrative officer), established that the two men (one of them wearing dark glasses), who had settled down

on a small elevation in the forest directly above the garden entrance, had brand new identity cards which said that they were engineers from Regensburg. They claimed to be working in the armaments industry and to have been evacuated with it to this part of Germany.

The Gestapo was clearly on a man-hunt and, although nobody knew who was going to be implicated next, fear was spreading. That evening, Karl Strölin, having learned of Speidel's arrest, came to see Rommel. He found Rommel distressed and worried that his house might be bugged. Afterwards, Lucie Rommel phoned Strölin asking him not to come to the house again. (A Gestapo agent indeed reported the visit.) The Rommels themselves soon noticed that 'former friends suddenly became remarkably silent'.

Meanwhile, Rommel was frustrated at the slow pace of his recovery. He was still suffering badly from insomnia and constant headaches. At the same time, he kept worrying about Speidel's fate and, although still not informed officially of the arrest, tried by every means available to him to obtain his release. However, Speidel's whereabouts remained unclear and Rommel could not even find out the reasons that had led to his arrest. Finally, on October 1, he wrote a long and straightforward letter to Hitler. He began by regretting that his health still kept him from accepting any new task: 'The quadruple skull-fracture, the unfavourable turn of events in the West and not least the dismissal and arrest of my former Chief-of-Staff, Generalleutnant Speidel, of which I learned only by chance, have all placed an intolerable burden on my nerves.' After lavishly praising Speidel's capabilities and sense of duty in Normandy, he continued: 'I cannot imagine what can possibly have resulted in Generalleutnant Speidel's dismissal and arrest'. Rommel reminded Hitler of his letter of July 3 in which he explained why he had been unable to stave off the invasion and described his difficult relations with von Kluge. He concluded the letter: 'You, mein Führer, know how I have done everything in my power and capabilities, be it in the western campaign in 1940, or in Africa in 1941-3, or in Italy in 1943, or again in the West in 1944. Just one thought possessed me, constantly — to fight and win for your new Germany. Heil mein Führer! Erwin Rommel.'



The study is in fact a corner of the spacious living room. Herr Keppler told Karel that the layout remains the same as in 1944. Given the choice between public disgrace or suicide by poison, Rommel made his decision and went upstairs to say farewell to his wife. He had been told that the house was surrounded by Gestapo gunmen, and that roads in the neighbourhood had been blocked. He therefore discarded suggestions by his son and his adjutant to try to fight their way out.



Possibly the last photo of Rommel alive, taken just a few days before his death. At his feet his dachshund Elbo.

By now, Rommel's recovery had progressed so far that he could go to Tübingen by car for tests. Up to that time, his doctors Albrecht and Stock had been coming to Herrlingen regularly. Another drive to Tübingen for a thorough examination had been arranged for October 10.

On October 7, a telephone call came from the Führerhauptquartier saying, on behalf of Keitel, that Rommel had to be in Berlin on the 10th for an important meeting. A special train would fetch him from Ulm. 'I'm not that much of a fool', Rommel said when Hauptmann Aldinger passed him the message. 'We know these people now', he said, thinking of von Kluge's fate. 'I'd never get to Berlin alive.' Rommel got in touch with Dr Albrecht in Tübingen, speaking quite openly with him about the matter, and the professor immediately certified him as unfit to travel. Albrecht tried to persuade Rommel to go into his clinic, saying he would be safer there, but Rommel merely said he would keep the offer in mind.

Meanwhile, Aldinger tried to get in touch with Keitel in Berlin. Instead, General der Infanterie Wilhelm Burgdorf, the new chief of the Heeres-Personalamt (Army Personnel Office) and Hitler's chief adjutant, came to the phone, and, with his wife and Aldinger listening in, Rommel spoke to him. He asked Burgdorf (an old comrade of Rommel's from the Dresden infantry school days) to inform Keitel that, in the opinion of the doctors, his present state of health did not yet permit him to make the journey. When he inquired what the meeting would be about, Burgdorf answered that the Führer had ordered Keitel to discuss with Rommel his possible future employment.

On October 11, Vizeadmiral Friedrich Ruge, his former naval aide at Heeresgruppe B, came to see Rommel, staying for the night. They had a long talk. Rommel complained that, as of October 15, retired field-marshals were no longer entitled to a Horch staff car or a permanent sentry guard. After dinner, Rommel voiced his worries over Speidel and, describing Keitel's request to come to Berlin, again exclaimed: 'And I know that I would never get there alive.' Next morning, Ruge had an appointment in Augsburg, and Rommel offered to bring him in his chauffeur-driven car.

On October 13, Rommel and his wife visited Oberstleutnant der Reserve Oskar Farny, a landowner who lived near Dürren in Wangen im Allgau and a friend of Rommel

since the days they had been subalterns together in Weingarten.

When the Rommels arrived back at Herrlingen later the same day, they found a telephone message from Burgdorf saying that he and another general would arrive in Herrlingen the following day at noon for a meeting to discuss Rommel's future employment. Rommel was not sure what that meant: were they indeed going to offer him a new command, perhaps in East Prussia; or were they coming to finally blame him for the collapse in France? Not in the least did he suspect the real purpose behind the forthcoming visit.

Saturday, October 14, was a clear day. In the morning, Rommel went for a long walk with his son, who had returned to his battery several weeks before, but had just that morning arrived home on short leave. He told Manfred he did not have much confidence in the coming meeting and did not know whether it was not a manoeuvre to get rid of him. Arriving back at 11.00 a.m., Rommel went to his room on the first floor and changed from his favourite brown civilian jacket which he usually wore over riding breeches to his open-collar Africa tunic. He also put on his *Pour le Mérite*.

At 12.00 a.m. punctually, a small, dark-green, 1.7-litre Mercedes with a Berlin number plate stopped outside the garden gate. Burgdorf and two other officers — General-major Ernst Maisel, head of the Personalamt legal section, and Major Anton Ehrensperger, Maisel's aide — alighted from the car and entered the house where Rommel and Aldinger awaited them. Lucie and Manfred were present to greet the visitors. With all respect and courteousness, the two generals asked permission to speak to Rommel alone so the others left the study, Lucie retiring upstairs to her bedroom and Manfred to his room on the same floor. Rommel ordered Aldinger to have the Normandy dossier ready. While the generals talked, Aldinger joined Ehrensperger in the garden. Loistl, the manservant, walked out to the little Mercedes to invite the driver to bring it in through the gate, but the man, in SS uniform, coldly declined. A large police limousine, packed with plain-clothes men, stood a little further down the lane.

In the study, Burgdorf unceremoniously told his old friend: 'You have been accused

of complicity in the plot on the Führer's life'. He handed over a letter from Keitel and read out three testimonies; of von Hofacker, Speidel and von Stülpnagel. Stunned by the unexpected turn of events, Rommel was momentarily silent. Then he said: 'Jawohl, I will take the consequences. I forgot myself.' His next question was: 'Does the Führer know about this?' and Burgdorf answered affirmatively. Asking Maisel to leave the room for a few minutes, Burgdorf then conveyed Hitler's promise that, if Rommel agreed to commit suicide, then the secret of his treason would not be made public, a monument would be erected in his memory, his next of kin would be left unharmed, and Lucie would remain entitled to full field-marshal's pension. There was no need for a gun, Burgdorf added; he had brought poison capsules that worked in three seconds. Burgdorf left the study and joined Maisel and the others in the garden, leaving Rommel to think it over. The talk had lasted just under an hour.

A few minutes later, Rommel went upstairs to his wife's room. Seeing the strange expression on his face, she asked him: 'What's the matter?'. Absent-mindedly, he answered: 'In a quarter of an hour, I shall be dead.' He then added that in the name of the Führer, he had been given the choice of either letting himself be poisoned or being taken before a People's Court. He was suspected of complicity in the July 20 plot and von Stülpnagel, Speidel and von Hofacker had all made statements incriminating him. In addition, so the generals had claimed, he was on the list of Dr Goerdeler as prospective president of Germany. Rommel told his wife that he had answered Burgdorf and Maisel that he could not believe the accusations and that the so-called statements could only be the disfigured results of torture. Lucie begged her husband to go before the court, but he refused, saying he was not afraid of being tried in public, because he could defend all his deeds, but was convinced he would never reach Berlin, but would be eliminated before it. During the meeting, he had been given the programme for the ending of his life, down to the details of his funeral, with gruesome clarity. The poison had already been brought by the generals. Embracing her, Rommel bade his wife a last farewell.

Going out of the room he met his son who had heard his father come upstairs and was anxious to know what was afoot. In the boy's own room, Rommel explained what was going on. Reassuring him that he and his mother would be provided for and not be hurt, he implored him to keep strictest silence or else Hitler's promise would not hold. Briefly he took leave of his son, then told him to find Aldinger. At Manfred's call, Aldinger came running upstairs, carrying the Normandy file. 'I won't be needing it', said Rommel, 'they came about something quite different.' Like Manfred, Aldinger pleaded with Rommel to make at least an attempt to escape. They suggested shooting their way out, but Rommel refused, saying the house was surrounded by Gestapo men and the streets blocked with four or five SS cars. He knew they would never get away and had his wife and son to think about. 'I have made up my mind', he said, speaking more quickly. 'In about half an hour, there will come a telephone call from Ulm to say that I've had an accident and am dead.' He looked at his watch. 'I must go, they've only given me ten minutes'. He said goodbye once more to Manfred and Aldinger, then all three went downstairs. Lucie, broken and in tears, remained in her room.

Manfred helped his father into his leather coat. Suddenly, Rommel pulled out his wallet. 'There's still 150 marks in here', he said. 'Shall I take the money with me?' 'That doesn't matter now, Herr Feldmarschall', said Aldinger. As Rommel put his wallet carefully back in his pocket, his dachshund jumped up at him. 'Shut the dog in the study, Manfred', he said, and he and Aldinger waited while the boy removed the excited dog. Loistl handed Rommel his marshal's baton and cap. Then Rommel, with Manfred and Aldinger at his side, stepped out of the house. As they walked down the driveway, Rommel handed his house-keys and the wallet to his son. The two generals were at the garden gate and saluted Rommel with the 'Heil Hitler!'. Major Ehrensperger had already left to make the arrangements. Burgdorf stepped aside for Rommel to pass through the gate and all walked down to the car. A knot of villagers stood outside the drive. 'What battery are you with', asked Maisel, turning to Manfred. '36/7, Herr General', answered the boy. The driver, SS-Hauptscharführer Heinrich Doose, swung the door of the car open and stood to attention. Rommel pushed his baton under his left arm and gave Aldinger and Manfred his hand once more. With his foot on the running-board, he turned around and said:



Left: After going downstairs, Rommel took leave of his staff in the hallway right.



Outside the garden gate, Rommel shook hands with Manfred and Aldinger for the last time before climbing into the small Reichskanzlei Mercedes which had brought the two generals from Berlin. The car drove off, uphill in the direction of Blaubeuren.



A few hundred yards further on, the car took the left fork in the direction of the village of Wippingen.



Left: After about half a mile, just where the road leaves the woods, the car stopped and Burgdorf ordered Maisel and the driver to go for a walk. Burgdorf and Rommel had known each other from their days at the Dresden infantry school in 1929-1933; one can only speculate about their feelings as Burgdorf gave his old friend the suicide pills that he had brought along for the purpose. A few minutes later, Rommel was dead. **Right:** In 1972, the municipality of Herrlingen-Wipplingen made plans to erect a memorial at the site of the suicide. Unfortunately,



because Wipplingen wanted the stone put up on their side of the communal boundary, and because it was felt that it would look better at the top of the hill, the memorial was set up a little distance beyond the actual spot where Rommel took the poison. The text, on a panzer hatch supplied by the Bundeswehr, reads: 'During a car ride up Wipplingen hill, he was forced to commit suicide. He took poison to protect his family against the terror of an inhuman system. With his decision of conscience, he defeated this inhumanity.'

'Manfred, I think Speidel has probably had it too. Take care of Frau Speidel, won't you.' Then he climbed in, taking a seat in the back, and Burgdorf and Maisel followed him. The car drove off, uphill in the direction of Blaubeuren, and disappeared round a bend.

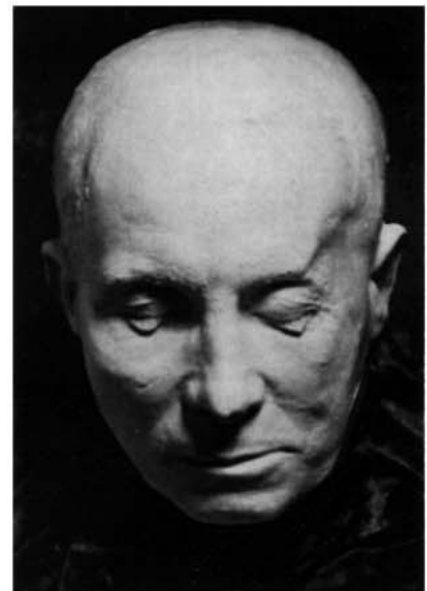
At the road fork a few hundred yards further up, the car took the left lane, to Wipplingen. Half a mile further on, about where the road emerged from the woods, it stopped. Burgdorf told Maisel and Doose to get out, saying he wished to be alone with

Rommel. Walking up the road for some distance, the two men saw that Burgdorf had left the car and was strolling up and down alongside it. After about five minutes, Burgdorf waved to the other men to return. Approaching, they saw Rommel leaning lifelessly against the back seat. As Doose later recalled: 'He was unconscious, slumped down and sobbing — not a death-rattle or groaning, but sobbing.' Doose sat Rommel upright and put his cap, which had fallen on the floor, back on.

Driving on to join the main road at Wipplingen, the three men turned back to Ulm and, shortly afterwards, delivered Rommel's body to the Reserve-Lazaret which was housed in the large school building of the Wagner-Schule on Wagner-Strasse. The chief medical officer, Oberstabsarzt Dr Breiderhoff, immediately noted the field-marshal's strange complexion, which made him instantly suspicious of the generals' claim that he had had a stroke, but nevertheless tried an injection to stimulate the heart.



The generals then sped back to Ulm and at 1.25 p.m. delivered Rommel's body to the Wagner-Schule, a large secondary school building which was then being used as a reserve Wehrmacht hospital. Here, Rommel was officially declared dead, an SS plain-clothes man instructing the doctors to enter 'heart failure' as the cause of death. Rommel's body was put in a small room where it remained for two days. **Left:** In 1972, the school on Wagner-Strasse was renamed the 'Hans und Sophie Scholl



Gymnasium' after the brother and sister who led the 'Weisse Rose' (White Rose) anti-Nazi opposition cell at Munich University and were executed in 1943. **Right:** On orders from above, there was to be no post-mortem, and the body was to be cremated to erase all traces of the poison. All that remained was Rommel's death-mask. According to Lucie Rommel, it conveyed a 'look of utter contempt' which she had never seen in his lifetime but which clearly showed after his death. (SV)



On Monday, October 16, Rommel's body was returned to the family home at Herrlingen where it lay in uniform on a death bed in the smoking room (a screened off section of the living room). When he died, Rommel was 52 years old. (RA)

A man in civilian clothes then appeared who identified himself as a member of the SS and instructed the doctor to put down 'heart failure' as the cause of death. Oberstleutnant Dr Josef Kandler, chief doctor of the Ulm military hospitals, signed the death statement.

Some 25 minutes after the car had left the Rommel house, the 'phone rang. Aldinger answered it. It was Ehrensperger, speaking from the Wagner-Schule. 'Aldinger,' he said, 'a terrible thing has happened. The field-marshal has had a haemorrhage, a brain-storm, in the car. He is dead. . . . Please tell Frau Rommel that I am coming back to the house at once.' Aldinger walked upstairs to Rommel's widow to deliver the message. When Ehrensperger arrived half an hour later, he told him that Frau Rommel was unable to receive him. In silence, the two men drove to the Wagner-Schule to see Rommel's body which they found lying on a camp bed in a small room.

While Aldinger was away, Oberst von Kuzmany, Ortskommandant of Ulm, came to Herrlingen to see Frau Rommel. Burgdorf and Maisel had come to his headquarters, he said, to announce the sudden death of the field-marshal. They had 'phoned the Führerhauptquartier to report and, as a result, ordered him to make preparations for a state funeral.

Later in the afternoon, Aldinger drove Lucie and Manfred to the hospital. Dr Breiderhoff, biting his tongue, told them that the two generals had brought in Rommel, dead, at 1.25 p.m. He told them of the order to apply a heart injection, and that it had had no effect. There was to be no post-mortem — on orders from above. Then he led them to the room. 'When I saw my husband', Lucie Rommel later said, 'I noticed at once an expression of deep contempt on his face. It was one we had never seen on it when he was alive.'

That evening, Rommel's death was reported to Hitler in his Wolfsschanze headquarters. His only reaction was: 'Yet another of the old ones'. He ordered to withhold press releases on Rommel's death for the moment. Next day, October 15, Burgdorf returned to the Führerhauptquartier and reported to Hitler and Keitel. He had brought Rommel's baton and cap.

General Maisel was still in Ulm. That evening, Gefreiter Drake, Rommel's chauffeur, drove Lucie, Manfred and Aldinger to the station to meet Rommel's sister, who had come from Stuttgart. On the way, they stopped at the Ortskommandantur where Aldinger had been ordered to report to discuss the funeral. While Lucie and Manfred waited in the car, Maisel suddenly

* 42 Telegramm		Deutsche Reichspos.	
aus: v. Aus. den. Felde 47/44 v. 16. 10. 44 15.34 Uhr			
Aufgenommen Tag: 16. 10. 44 19.00 Uhr		Telegramm des Führers	Übermittelt Tag: 16. 10. 44 19.30
von: Ulm durch: Schindler		An Frau Lucia Rommel	an: Herrlingen Schindl
Amt Herrlingen		Herrlingen bei ulm Donau.	
Nehmen Sie zu dem schweren Verluste den Sie durch den Tod Ihres Gatten erlitten haben mein aufrichtiges Beileid entgegen. Der Name des Generalfeldmarschall Rommel wird für immer mit den Heldenhaften Kämpfen in Nordafrika verbunden sein. Adolf Hitler			
Für dienstliche Rückfragen		E. Z. 4. 43	

Hitler's telegram of condolence arrived at 7.00 p.m. that evening: 'Please accept my deepest sympathy on the loss of your husband. The name of Generalfeldmarschall Rommel will always be linked with the heroic fighting in North Africa.' The first public announcement of Rommel's death came over the wireless one hour later. (SV)



With utter cynicism, Rommel's funeral had been meticulously planned days in advance of his death. A special 'Study Group F', commanded by Oberstleutnant Fressen of the Heeres-Personalamt, drafted a programme entitled 'Sequence for a



State Funeral (R)' in which only the date and the place were left blank. The date finally chosen was Wednesday, October 18. In the morning, with a Guard of Honour lined up in the driveway, the flag-draped coffin was carried out of the house.



Left: Arriving at Ulm town hall, the coffin was placed on a catafalque in the 'Grosser Sitzungssaal' (Great Session Chamber) with four young officers of the Afrika-Korps mounting guard. (IWM) Right: Three months after Rommel's state funeral, Ulm town hall was completely gutted by fire in RAF



Bomber Command's one and only raid on the city on December 17. When rebuilt after the war, the interior followed a different design. Again altered extensively in 1989, this is what the council chamber of what is now called the Old Town Hall looks like today.

appeared and began to offer his sympathy. Frau Rommel turned away from him. When Helene Rommel saw her brother's body, she, too, remarked on the contemptuous look on his face. That evening, the German radio announced Rommel's death 'as the result of the serious wounds of his car accident in France'.

On the 16th, Rommel's body was taken back to the house. The face uncovered, it lay beneath a swastika flag in the same room where the interview with the generals had taken place. Under orders from Ulm, two officers mounted guard over it with drawn swords.

With the public announcement of Rommel's death came a flood of telegrams and letters of condolence. Hitler's sent a two-line telegram. Propaganda Minister Goebbels and his wife expressed their deepest sympathy, as did Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. SS chief Himmler sent an assistant, Alfred Berndt, to deliver a personal message which said that he, Himmler, knew the whole story, that he was horrified and that he would never have had a hand in such a thing. Feldmarschall Albert Kesselring, Rommel's professional arch-rival during his lifetime, wrote a sincere letter from Italy. Feldmarschall Walter Model, now in command of Heeresgruppe B, published a special Order of the Day. Göring's condolence telegram was strangely late, being dispatched only on the 26th. There was no message from either Keitel or Jodl.

The official state funeral took place on Wednesday, October 18. Hitler had declared it a day of national mourning. Everything was prepared to the minutest detail. In the morning, with a guard in steel helmets and white gloves presenting arms on the driveway, the flag-draped coffin was carried from the house to the town hall at Ulm. There it lay in state in the great council chamber, with Rommel's marshal's baton, helmet and sword, and a velvet cushion with the Pour le Mérite and other decorations placed on the bier. Four young officers of the Afrika-Korps mounted guard. Just before the ceremony, they were relieved by four Reichswehr generals, with Oberst Freiberg taking over the decorations cushion from Rommel's ADC, Hauptmann Hellmuth Lang.

Those attending the funeral from Berlin had been brought to Ulm in a special train the night before. Among those present were Feldmarschall Ritter von Leeb; Generaloberst Ruoff; SS-Oberstgruppenführer Sepp Dietrich, commander of I. SS-Panzerkorps under Rommel in Normandy; Vizeadmiral von Ruge; ex-Foreign Minister Baron Konstantin von Neurath (his complicity in the July 20 plot still as yet unrevealed); and



Above: The ceremony in the town hall over, eight Unteroffiziere carried the coffin, draped with the National War Flag, outside and back onto the gun carriage. Rommel's baton, swords and helmet can be seen lying on top of the coffin. The houses in the background were all destroyed in the raid of December 17, 1944. (IWM) Below: A completely new row of houses adorns Ulm Marktplatz today. Only the fountain on the far right forms a link with the past.





many other representatives of the armed forces, the Party, the Reich and Germany's allies. Among the mourners were Ruth Speidel, still ignorant of her husband's fate, and Karl Strölin — both in deadly fear of being arrested by the Gestapo.

All the troops in the neighbourhood were turned out. Everywhere in Ulm flags were flying at half-mast, and a great crowd had assembled to watch the proceedings outside the town hall. Two companies of infantry were paraded in the square, one of the Luftwaffe, one of the Waffen-SS, and a military band. Camera teams stood ready to film the ceremony for the German newsreels.

The proceedings began at 1.00 p.m. With the band playing the funeral march from the 'Götterdämmerung', Lucie and Manfred led the way, followed by Rommel's two brothers, Karl and Gerhard, and sister Helene and the official guests. Feldmarschall von Rundstedt, Rommel's superior in Normandy and again in command of OB West since September, delivered the funeral eulogy. He had not been informed of the true background and knew only the official version. He had been left free to write his own speech, but the end lines had been prescribed: 'this tireless fighter in the name of the Führer and the Reich . . . imbued with the National-Socialist spirit . . . His heart belonged to the Führer.' Next, von Rundstedt placed the giant wreath that had been sent by Hitler at Rommel's feet. Obviously ill at ease, he did not speak to Frau Rommel and left immediately after the ceremony.

Rommel's coffin was carried outside, placed on a gun carriage and, followed by a long motorcade, slowly driven through the

Following the coffin, Hitler's wreath is carried outside. With cynical efficiency, the six-foot tribute was despatched to Ulm even before Rommel was actually dead. On October 13, the day before his death, the local Wehrmacht garrison at Ulm received a message to send an officer to the railway station next morning to pick up a large wreath from the Berlin express. It actually arrived before Burgdorf and Maisel called at Rommel's house for the fatal interview. *Right:* When the town hall burned down, the outer walls remained standing and could be easily restored after the war, making for a perfect comparison today. The ground floor of the Altes Rathaus is now occupied by a restaurant of the Mövenpick chain. *Below:* Towed by an SdKfz 6 semi-track, the gun carriage leads the procession through Ulm to the town crematorium, saluted by dignitaries of the Reich, Party and the armed forces. (SV)



After cremation, his ashes were given back to the family. Then on Saturday, October 21, one week after his death, Rommel's urn was interred in the local cemetery. In the final days at Herrlingen, Rommel had had premonitions of his end. Around October 10, he quietly told Hauptmann Aldinger that in the event of his death he wanted to be buried in one of three

places: Heidelberg, Heidenheim (his birthplace) or Herrlingen — in any case somewhere small and solitary, and not at all majestic. Here (L-R) Aldinger, Frau Rommel and Manfred (in the grey-blue uniform of a Luftwaffe auxiliary) arrive at the cemetery. Apart from the perpetrators, they were the only ones who knew the true circumstances of Rommel's death. (RA)



Above left: Herrlingen churchyard slopes down in terraces. While Frau Rommel and Manfred take up position, the urn is brought down to the prepared grave, already surrounded by numerous floral tributes. (BA) **Above right:** The plot chosen was against the southern wall of the cemetery. (BA) **Right:** While the two sword-bearers take up position on either side, the officer, having placed the urn, gives the Nazi salute. (RA)

streets to the town crematorium. (Hitler had ordered a cremation so that no evidence would remain of the suicide.) Thousands of spectators watched the procession and the entire route was flanked by lines of Hitler Youth boys and girls. At the crematorium chapel, Gauleiter Murr held a short speech in which he pledged to take care of the bereaved wife and son. Next came Freiherr Hanns-Gert von Eisebeck, Rommel's special staff correspondent since Africa days, who was the first to openly refer to the air attack that had wounded Rommel. A personal word was spoken by an old First World War comrade. After wreaths had been laid, and three salute salvos been fired, the coffin slowly disappeared, accompanied by the musical tones of 'Ich hatte einen Kameraden' (I had a comrade). Although few of those present knew the true background, many people, both at the town hall and the crematorium, had a feeling that there was something not quite right about the funeral. There were many meaningful looks and whispered guesses.

Next day, Rommel's ashes were brought home to Herrlingen and two days later, on October 21, the final act took place when the urn was ceremoniously interred in the village churchyard. As in Ulm, throngs of Hitler Youth boys and girls lined the road up to the cemetery. One officer, escorted by two sword-bearers, carried the urn to the chosen plot next to the southern churchyard wall and reverently lowered it into the grave. Manfred read a final word of mourning, after which the family lined up in front of the grave to accept condolences.

Today, the additional stone on the right marks the grave of Lucie Rommel who died on September 26, 1971.





The mourners offer their condolences to Frau Rommel. Major Kimmich, a comrade of Rommel's from the First World War, expresses his sympathy. On the left is Hauptmann Hellmuth Lang, Rommel's personal aide from March 1944 until his repatriation to Herrlingen in August of that year. Manfred stands behind. In early March 1945, Lucie received a letter from the 'Generalbaurat für die Gestaltung der deutschen Kriegerfriedhöfe' (General Architectural Council for the Creation of German War Cemeteries). It read: 'The Führer has given me an order to erect a monument to the late Feldmarschall Rommel, and I have asked a number of sculptors to submit designs. I enclose some of them. At this moment, it would not be possible to erect this monument or to transport it. One can only make a model. I think that the field-marshal should be represented by a lion. One artist has depicted a dying lion, another a lion

weeping, the third a lion about to spring. I prefer the last myself but if you prefer a dying lion, that, too, could be arranged. The slab can be made immediately as I have special permission from Reichsminister Speer. Generally, monuments cannot now be made in stone. However, in this special case, it can be made and quickly shipped.' Frau Rommel made no reply. Instead Rommel's grave was marked with a simple wooden cross. Carved on it was the Pour le Mérite (his award from the First World War) and the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds, which in the Third Reich era was adorned with a swastika in the centre. After the war, a law was passed in Germany forbidding any public display of the Nazi emblem and, although Lucie objected to it, the swastika on Rommel's cross was cut away. (BA) Below: Today, one can still see the tiny square where it used to be.

POSTSCRIPT

The accusation of complicity in the July 20 plot and Hitler's accompanying death warrant on October 14 came as a total surprise and shock to Rommel, for he was completely ignorant of what had gone on behind the scenes since that fateful July day. What had happened was this.

In the aftermath of July 20, von Stüpnagel, summoned to Germany by Keitel, attempted suicide on July 21. The attempt failed and, having fallen into the hands of the Gestapo, he was heard murmuring Rommel's name in his delirium.

Von Hofacker was questioned, first by a commission of inquiry which von Kluge had felt compelled to set up, and then by the Gestapo in Paris. Von Hofacker baffled the Gestapo by flooding them with information. However, the colonel was playing a very shrewd game. Knowing his life was forfeit, he did the only thing that could possibly save him. Speaking freely and seemingly 'telling everything', he named von Kluge and Rommel as implicated in the plot. At the same time, while sheltering behind the two popular and powerful field-marschalls, he never once betrayed the real conspirators, close friends like Speidel, von Falkenhausen and others.



Von Hofacker's testimony seemed confirmed when Oberst Georg Hansen, Hitler's new chief of intelligence, admitted that Stauffenberg and von Hofacker had quoted Rommel and Kluge to their fellow plotters in Berlin as believing that the Western Front would collapse within two weeks.

On August 1, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, chief of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office), put the reports of von Hofacker's and Hansen's statements before Hitler. Hitler was shocked. As he confided to Jodl, he planned 'to question Rommel after his recovery, and then to retire him without any fuss'.

The investigation continued. On August 12, Goerdeler was arrested. He, too, supplied the Gestapo with a flood of information and documents, chief among which was a list of alleged fellow conspirators which named Rommel as a possible future Reichspresident. On the 14th, SS-Gruppenführer Herman Fegelein, Hitler's SS liaison officer, and SS chief Heinrich Himmler presented this new evidence to Hitler.

Von Kluge (who, incidentally, had not sent off Rommel's pessimistic report of July 15 until the 21st, one day after the bomb had gone off) had indeed vaguely promised von

Hofacker his support for the coup. Although he had gone back on his promise in the decisive hours, he had clearly incriminated himself and could expect Hitler's wrath. On August 15, he was mysteriously absent from his headquarters all day, and Hitler, suspecting that the field-marshal had been out trying to contact the enemy, sacked him and ordered him to return to Germany forthwith. On the 18th, von Kluge committed suicide by taking cyanide.

As more and more conspirators were rounded up, the Gestapo learned that Speidel was also involved in the assassination plot. By August 25, Hitler was clamouring for his arrest. Other 'circumstantial evidence' against Rommel reached Hitler's ears: Oberst Hans-Georg von Tempelhoff, Rommel's operations officer, was married to an English woman; Oberst Hans Lattmann, Rommel's artillery officer, was a brother of Martin Lattmann, a general who had deserted to the Russians at Stalingrad and was now broadcasting against Germany from Moscow. Such officers, so Hitler suspected, must have influenced Rommel's pessimistic evaluations of the Western Front. By this time, Hitler's feeling towards Rommel was one of benign disappointment, rather than malevolence or a sense of betrayal.

After he had been arrested, Speidel was interrogated at Gestapo headquarters in Berlin on September 11 and 12. Confronted with von Hofacker's story that, on his visit to Rommel's headquarters on July 9, he and Speidel had discussed the actual assassination plot before going in to see Rommel, Speidel's interrogators wanted to know whether or not he had reported this to Rommel. Speidel was in very difficult position. Unless he put all the blame on Rommel, he could only accuse von Hofacker of lying. According to Speidel's post-war testimony, it was von Hofacker who saved him. In a face-to-face confrontation between the two men — according to Speidel's version — von Hofacker shielded Speidel 'magnificently', withdrawing his earlier statements about the latter's complicity.

About this time, the Rommels were visited by the Kreisleiter (Nazi district head) of Ulm, Eugen Maier, who asked them whether the household staff was to be trusted, as the head of the Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service) in Ulm had told him that the field-marshal no longer believed in final victory and criticised the leadership. Rommel was incautious enough to openly say to Maier that he thought Hitler's mental faculties had steadily declined since 1942. Maier evidently passed this on, for on September 28, Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary, submitted to the Führer a report from a Nazi functionary disclosing Rommel's 'undiminished hostility to the regime'.

By now, the Gestapo had completed its interrogation of Speidel and on October 4 the army's Court of Honour convened to hear the evidence. If that court convicted Speidel, he would be thrown out of the army and be at the mercy of the People's Court. Presided over by Keitel, the court consisted of himself and five generals, among whom was Guderian. Speidel was not present. Gestapo chief Kaltenbrunner personally stated the prosecution case. Speidel, he said, had admitted that he was informed about the murder plot by an emissary from von Stülpnagel's staff, but claimed to have duly reported that to his superior, Rommel. It was not his fault, so ran Speidel's case, if the field-marshal had not passed his warning on. Against this, Kaltenbrunner argued that Rommel would certainly have told his Chief-of-Staff if he intended to sit on the warning and in that case Speidel should have reported the plot to the High Command himself. Thus, the court had to choose between Speidel and Rommel. If they decided to believe Speidel, that would mean a condemnation of Rommel. Rommel was decidedly unpopular with his fellow generals, and although Keitel announced Hitler's firm



For a long time after the war, the exact circumstances of Rommel's last minutes remained a mystery, even to his next of kin. With the main culprit, General Burgdorf, having committed suicide in the Führerbunker in Berlin in May 1945, the main surviving witness was former Generalmajor Ernst Maisel, who had accompanied Burgdorf to Herrlingen. After the war, there were several attempts to prosecute Maisel for the 'manslaughter' of Rommel. *Left:* At his 1948 trial before a German denazification court at Rosenheim in Bavaria, Maisel for the first time described what had happened. Frau Rommel had been invited to give evidence, but refused, not wishing to see Maisel again. (SV) *Right:* One who did give evidence was Manfred Rommel, by now 20 years old and studying law at Tübingen University. The case was adjourned for further evidence and in July 1949 Maisel was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. As he had already spent more than two years in custody, he was immediately released although he was not finally acquitted until 1961. (SV)



Rommel's reputation and popularity, already large during the war, both in Germany and with his adversaries, only increased after the war was over. Although his involvement in the July 20 plot was emphatically denied in the initial post-war period, as soon as it became clear that only those Germans associated in some way with the anti-Hitler opposition were acceptable to the western Occupying Powers, this changed. Former subordinate officers like Speidel, and Ruge, his naval aide, wrote memoirs which carefully fostered the myth of his involvement in the conspiracy. By association, both gained from it, Speidel rising to become the commander of the new Bundeswehr, and later one of NATO's top commanders, and Ruge that of Germany's new navy. Although the two generals bringing Rommel his death warrant had confronted him with a written statement by Speidel incriminating him in the plot to kill Hitler, after the war Speidel consistently denied ever having made such a statement to his Gestapo interrogators. The records of his interrogations were never found and the question has really remained unsolved to this day. Yet it never seemed to affect Speidel's good relations with the Rommel family. In 1959, then Commander of all NATO forces in Central Europe, he was again present at the anniversary of Rommel's death with Helene Rommel (left), the field-marshal's sister, and Lucie.

belief in Speidel's guilt, Guderian and the other generals opted in favour of Speidel. They boldly argued that if Speidel said he reported the plot to Rommel, it was for the prosecution to prove the contrary. Thus, Speidel was not convicted (he remained in Gestapo custody for the rest of the war). His acquittal, however, tightened the noose around Rommel.

Meanwhile, in Berlin, von Hofacker had signed a lengthy statement alleging that Rommel had actually guaranteed the plotters his active support if the assassination succeeded.

And so, with all this 'evidence' having accumulated against Rommel, Hitler made up his mind. After a war conference on the 12th, he briefed Keitel to make von Hofacker's testimony available to Rommel. He also dictated to Keitel a letter to be handed to Rommel which set out two alternatives: if he was innocent, then he must report to the Führer; if not, he would be arrested and tried. However, as a German officer, he ought to avoid that shame by 'taking the appropriate action', that is, commit suicide. Keitel handed the letter and interrogation reports to Burgdorf to carry down to Herrlingen in person. He indicated that, if Rommel chose suicide, it would be better to offer him poison rather than a pistol. His death could then be concealed as being 'by natural causes' and he would still get a honourable burial. Hitler had granted Rommel one last favour. Preparing for the trip, Burgdorf ordered Generalmajor Ernst Maisel, head of his department's legal section, to accompany him to Herrlingen as an official witness. Maisel in turn ordered his aide, Major Ehrensperger, to come along.

Although Gestapo spies continued to keep the house under surveillance after Rommel's death, Hitler kept his promise to leave Rommel's next of kin unmolested. Yet, both Lucie and Manfred spent the rest of the war in great anxiety, each day expecting the Gestapo to come down on them because they knew too much. Manfred, transferred to an infantry battalion shortly after his father's death, made up his mind in April 1945 to get himself taken prisoner as soon as he got news that the Americans were in Ulm and his mother was safe. He surrendered to the French near Riedlingen on the Danube. The house staff,



In late 1950, Rommel's wartime letters to his wife and other papers, which had been confiscated by the US Army in 1945, were returned to the family. The recovery came just after Lucie Rommel had published *Krieg ohne Hass* (War without Hate) — Rommel's own account of the campaign in Africa, written during his convalescence at Herrlingen in 1944 — and too late for Brigadier Desmond Young to include them in his biography *Rommel*, published in January 1950. (SV)

who had witnessed Rommel's last minutes, were not persecuted either, although Rudolf Loistl, the old war-invalidated servant, was called up for duty in the final days of the war.

For a present-day visitor to Herrlingen, there is much that reminds one of Rommel's life and death, in addition to his grave in the village cemetery. The municipality has always cherished the memory of its most-famous inhabitant. Shortly after the war, Wippinger-Steige, the lane where he had lived, was renamed Erwin-Rommel-Steige. In 1972, a memorial stone was set up near the spot where he committed suicide. The municipality also founded what is called the 'Rommel-Archiv',

which collects documents and artifacts connected with his life and, since 1989, has a permanent exhibition in Lindenhof house, a minute's walk from the cemetery. Among the archive's prize exhibits are Rommel's field-marshal's uniform jacket, his Afrika-Korps tunic, his decorations, and his yellow Perspex desert goggles. The archive does not have Rommel's field-marshal's baton, which apparently is still with the family.

The house where Rommel lived remains exactly as it was. The grounds are private property, but a plaque at the gate, set up by the present owner, Herr Keppler, records its fascinating history.



Together with former Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein (Rommel's Chief-of-Staff in 1942-43 and commander of the Panzer-Lehr-Division in 1944), Manfred immediately started work on an integral publication of the assembled papers. In August 1950, he and Bayerlein travelled to London to promote the forthcoming publication. Left: Here they pass the guard at Marlborough House. The book was eventually published in 1953 under the editorship of B. H. Liddell Hart as *The Rommel Papers*. (SV) Right: After the war, Manfred sought to make a



career independent of his father's fame, and eventually he became Lord Mayor of Stuttgart, the capital city of Baden-Württemberg. Yet he never shied away from the obligations of being the son of the 'Desert Fox', and on many occasions attended Afrika-Korps reunions or met former adversaries of his father. In October 1984, he was teamed up with the son of an equally famous field-marshal, Viscount Montgomery, at the Eighth Army veterans' reunion at Blackpool (Field-Marshal Montgomery died in March 1976). (PA)



In 1952, 20th Century Fox began production of *The Desert Fox*, the film based on Young's biography and, in February of that year, a Hollywood film crew came to Herrlingen for shooting on the historic location — the street having by then been renamed Erwin-Rommel-Steige. *Left:* Here, director Henry Hathaway (centre) poses with Manfred and Brigadier Young. Only exterior

shots were filmed at Herrlingen with stand-in actors, all scenes later being shot in Hollywood with the real actors, foremost among them James Mason as the field-marshal and Jessica Tandy as Lucie Rommel. (SV) *Right:* Standing in for Mason at Herrlingen was German actor Sepp Rist, seen here with Manfred during a break in the shooting. (SV)



Two vital props for the film were Rommel's field-marshal's cap and baton. When Rommel's body was returned to the family two days after his death, Hauptmann Aldinger discovered that the cap and baton were missing. He telephoned General Burgdorf, who had taken them as 'trophy' to Berlin and, protesting against this 'unheard-of behaviour', demanded that they be returned. Against all expectations, the items were sent back to the family a month later. Seven years later, the Rommels allowed 20th Century Fox to make detailed sketches of them to enable the props department to fabricate accurate copies. *Above left:* Here, designer N. Howard works on the cap. (SV) *Above right:* Today the cap, together with other Rommel memorabilia, can be seen in the Rommel-Archiv. This was set up by the local municipality and was initially housed in the town hall at Herrlingen, but in 1989 the archive was moved to an adjoining and newly-restored Jugendstil country house, the Lindenhof, where a small permanent exhibition was set up (*right*). The museum has no regular opening hours but admission is on request at the nearby town office.





ERWIN ROMMEL
1891 - 1944
FELTHERRE